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## ABSTRACT

This collection of essays chronicles the contributions of 14 West Virginia women active in individual and group endeavors from 1824 to the present. Because the achievements of these women are absent from previous histories of West Virginia, their stories constitute missing chapters in the state's history. Some of these women made contributions in traditional feminine roles while others achieved success in professional and public fields. The lives and careers of these West Virginia women prove that they have not been merely passive observers of history, but active participants in the process. Although not all the women are West Virginia natives, they have all had a share in the state's development. They merit recognition in West Virginia history, not just to correct an imbalance in historical writing, but to provide positive examples to other women. The women chronicled are: Livia Simpson Poffenbarger; Aunt Jenny Wilson; Val Sayre Hammond; Mary Elizabeth Behner Christopher; Elizabeth Kee; Naomi M. Garrett; Ann Kathryn Flagg; Rebecca Tendaal Wood Littlepage; Agnes Greer; Anna Maria Reeves Jarvis; Minnie Holley Barnes; Gertrude Humphreys; Genevieve Starcher; and Ruth Ann Musick. One organization, the West Virginia Farm Women's Club, is also included. A bibliography follows each biography, and black and white photographs are included. (APG)

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Missing  
Chapters  
II

# WEST VIRGINIA WOMEN in HISTORY

West Virginia Women's Commission

SO-018 312



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## MISSING CHAPTERS II

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# *WEST VIRGINIA WOMEN IN HISTORY*

A project of the  
WEST VIRGINIA WOMEN'S COMMISSION  
and the  
WEST VIRGINIA WOMEN'S FOUNDATION  
and the  
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PROJECT EDITOR: Dr. Frances S. Hensley

PROJECT DIRECTOR: Barbara Matz

PROJECT STAFF: Roslyn Holdzkom,  
Lavonne Sanders, Adrienne Worthy,  
Evelyn Hansbarger, and Sharon Goodman

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## PREFACE

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### In Search Of The Missing

The essays in this collection chronicle the contributions of West Virginia women in individual and group endeavors spanning a period from 1824 to the present. Because the contributions of these women are absent from previous histories of West Virginia(1), their stories truly constitute "missing chapters" in the state's history.

In their absence from written history, these West Virginia women share a condition with their sisters in the other 49 states, and, indeed, in the rest of the world. Traditional history, with its focus on politics, diplomacy, war, and great economic change, has been the province of a few "great men." Not until the development of social history as a legitimate specialty within the discipline did historians begin to challenge this narrow interpretation of history. By ceasing to focus exclusively on the famous and the infamous, on the exploits on the battlefield and deliberations in high office, social historians began to explore the entire range of human enterprise. As a result, they discovered the variety that has characterized the American experience and shaped the unique development of the nation.

Slaves, shopkeepers, immigrants, farmers, and laborers are among those whose contributions to and experiences in American society have been scrutinized by social historians. And yet, even in these laudable efforts to offer a more balanced historical picture, the emphasis has generally been on working-class males. The unique contributions and experiences of women remained "hidden from history" until the emergence of women's history as a separate and distinct specialty.(2)

Traditional historians defended their exclusion of women from written history by claiming that there were no women involved in the significant events in American history. Indeed, one historian claimed that history has been "pretty much a stag affair." (3) Spurred on by the interest generated by the rebirth of the women's movement in the 1960s, some historians began to reject the traditional definition of historical "significance," especially in relationship to the experiences of women in American history. In addition to establishing the credentials of women who *were* prominent (although mostly unrecorded) figures in America's past, women's historians claim significance for the non-famous—the female counterparts of the social historians' "common man."

To establish the significance of women who were not public figures, historians of women have stressed the historical importance of predominantly female occupations (nursing, teaching, textiles) and female-dominated institutions (family, church) and activities (charitable organizations, community service). Indeed, some historians use the term

"women's culture" to describe the predominantly female milieu in which most women throughout American history have lived and worked.(4) This women's culture, defined and shaped by women, encompassed the contemporary societal demands regarding women's roles, responsibilities, and restrictions. Within this culture, separate from but parallel to the prevailing patriarchal society, women exerted considerable influence on their families and communities. From the perspective of the women's culture, women were not passive, in spite of the legal and economic barriers to their full and equal participation in American society. Although one must be careful not to exaggerate the power and autonomy women derived from the women's culture, the concept is useful in placing the experiences of many women in historical context.

The West Virginia women whose lives are chronicled in the following pages fit both definitions of women's significance in history. The contributions of some of the women were in the realm of traditional "feminine" pursuits identified with women's culture; the contributions of others were made in the professional and public fields.

The primary identification of women throughout American history, and the nucleus of women's culture, has been that of wife and mother. Society has traditionally designated home management (and often home industry) and child rearing as the first responsibilities and highest calling of women. Most of these West Virginia women had families and home responsibilities. For some, like Rebecca Tendael Wood Littlepage and Jenny Wilson, these responsibilities were especially challenging. Littlepage, widowed during the Civil War, found her formerly comfortable estate depleted and struggled to provide for her children during the economic crisis in the War's aftermath. Wilson faced a similar situation when her coal-miner husband died, leaving her with scant resources except her own labor and determination with which to support her family. The experiences of Anna Maria Reeves Jarvis also indicate that motherhood could be a painful calling. Jarvis gave birth to 12 children, but, like so many other women in the 19th century, she saw only a few survive to adulthood. Jarvis turned this painful personal experience into a public campaign against the prevailing unsanitary conditions that were responsible for fatal diseases in children. As a tribute to Jarvis and the many other women whose sacrifices and contributions to their families and communities went unheralded, her daughter Anna initiated the first official Mother's Day celebration.

Because of women's child-rearing responsibilities and "inherently" nurturing nature, teaching became an acceptable, even complimentary, occupation for women by the end of the 19th century.(5) For some, like Naomi R. Garrett, Ruth Ann Musick, Minnie Holley Barnes, and Val Sayre Hammond, teaching was more than just a job; it was an integral part of their lives. Each spent many years as an educator, influencing generations of young West Virginians. For Ann Kathryn Flagg teaching was a profession that meshed well with her artistic career, allowing her to draw inspiration from her students as well as to encourage their creativity.

Since the early 19th century, charitable work and community service have been acceptable feminine pursuits. As with teaching, these activities



did not threaten prevailing sex roles, but were an extension of women's "natural" concern with the health and well-being of fellow human beings. Many women, including those in this study, made lasting contributions to their communities through their volunteer services. The early career of Mary Behner Christopher is an example of the impact of such activities. Christopher ministered to the poor and working class in the coal fields of northern West Virginia before, during, and after the Great Depression. Her model community center, The Shack, provided much-needed recreational, educational, and social services to the residents of Scott's Run and surrounding communities long before government and industry recognized the value of these functions. The Mothers' Day Work Clubs, formed by Anna Maria Reeves Jarvis in the nineteenth century, combatted unsanitary conditions in small communities near Webster. On a larger scale, the Farm Women's Clubs (now known as Extension Homemakers Clubs) promoted better schools, nutrition, health, sanitation, libraries, and home industry among rural women in the state. According to Gertrude Humphreys, who served as State Home Demonstration Leader for the Clubs from 1933 until 1965, these activities reflected a belief that "the home should be the center of every homemaker's life, but never the circumference."

Women have also long been associated with religious organizations and church-related social services. Some historians have claimed that women's influence in American churches was so great from the early 19th century on that it resulted in the "feminization" of American religion, the equation of traditional feminine traits, such as tenderness, compassion, and obedience, with religious virtue.<sup>(6)</sup> Many of these West Virginia women were active in church work, frequently in conjunction with their volunteer activities. Mary Behner Christopher's career of social service, for example, began as a Presbyterian mission in the coal fields.

Although women's contributions as teachers, community and church volunteers, and parents are seldom accorded merit, the careers of these West Virginia women indicate the impact such activities had. The lives of thousands, both within and outside the state, were enriched by the efforts of these women. Indeed, they may have had a more immediate, more profound impact on the lives of those they touched in their roles as educators, volunteers, and parents than did the remote institutions of government and finance.

Not all the experiences of women were within this women's culture, however. From the colonial period to the present, some women have been at the center of events in the public realm: in arts and letters, medicine, reform, political debates and campaigns, economic crises—in all the traditionally male-dominated pursuits.

For some women, these activities were an extension of their concern for their families, communities, and for humanity. Aunt Jenny Wilson's talents as a banjo-picker, singer, and storyteller, once confined to the entertainment of family and friends, eventually attracted national attention and made her a celebrity in the folk music field. Livia Simpson Poffenbarger's concern for the preservation of a local historic site led her to spearhead a state and national campaign to obtain a monument in

recognition of the significance of the Revolutionary War-era Battle of Point Pleasant. Val Sayre Hammond performed a similar service in Wirt County through her efforts to restore the cemetery and establish a museum.

In wartime emergencies, West Virginia women, like women across the nation, used their domestic and volunteer skills to serve the war effort. The women in the Farm Women's Clubs successfully promoted food production and preservation, sewing, and bond drives during two world wars. Anna Maria Reeves Jarvis, who nursed both Confederate and Union soldiers during the Civil War, initiated a Mothers' Friendship Day in Taylor County after the War in a successful effort to bridge the emotional gap between Confederate and Union sympathizers.

For other women, public life was a result of educational and career choices. Many of these West Virginia women earned college degrees, even advanced degrees, at a time when higher education was still a male preserve. This academic training led to careers in academe and in the arts. Dr. Ruth Ann Musick, a prolific writer and national authority on folklore preservation, and Dr. Naomi Garrett, a scholar of international repute, were college professors in an era when females were considered suitable as elementary teachers only. Ann Kathryn Flagg was a celebrated playwright who had one of her plays produced on network television. Genevieve Starcher became the Director of Teacher Education in the state and was responsible for introducing a novel, single curriculum for teacher education.

Some women excelled in the most patriarchal of institutions: politics and business. Newspaper publisher Livia Simpson Poffenbarger was a local political party spokeswoman in Mason County long before women even had the right to vote. Elizabeth Kee served as a member of the U. S. House of Representatives from 1951 until 1964. Agnes Greer was a successful businesswoman in the communications, manufacturing and construction industries, and an inventor with eighteen patents in her name.

The participation of women in the public area often meant overcoming the barriers of gender, race, and social pressure. Rebecca Tendael Wood Littlepage endured the taunts of a Confederate general when she, instead of her husband, successfully challenged the officer's right to commandeer her home during the Civil War. Livia Simpson Poffenbarger faced similar insults from her competitors in the newspaper business when she pursued a career in publishing and politics. Like many other women, Genevieve Starcher lost her teaching post during the Great Depression because she had no family to support. In spite of a master's degree and years of experience, Minnie Holley Barnes faced the prejudice of white colleagues, students, and parents when she was transferred to the formerly all-white Schools for the Deaf and Blind at Romney following the desegregation prompted by the United States Supreme Court's *Brown* decision in 1954.

The lives and careers of these West Virginia women prove that women have not been passive observers of the making of history, but, rather, active participants in the process. Although the women were not all natives of West Virginia, they have had a share in the state's development. They deserve to be accorded proper recognition in West Virginia history, not just

to redress an imbalance in historical writing, but so that they can provide other women with "a vital source of inspiration and self-esteem—that sense of pride which comes from appreciating the experiences and achievements of ordinary people like oneself." (7)

To these women and to those who will find inspiration in their experiences, *Missing Chapters II* is dedicated.

—by Dr. Frances S. Hensley  
Department of History  
Marshall University  
June, 1986

## ENDNOTES

1. The exception to this is Anna Jarvis, who is mentioned briefly in Otis K. Rice, *West Virginia: The State and Its People* (Parsons, WV: McClain Printing Co., 1972), p. 338. Only Jarvis and Ruth Ann Musick are profiled in Jim Comstock's *West Virginia Women* (Richwood: By the Author, 1974), pp. 222-227, 230.

2. For a discussion of the general male bias of written history, see Dolores Barracano Schmidt and Earl Robert Schmidt, "The Invisible Woman: The Historian as Professional Magician," and Linda Gordon et al., "Historical Phallacies: Sexism in American Historical Writing," in *Liberating Women's History: Theoretical and Critical Essays*, ed. Bernice Carroll (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1976), pp. 42-54, 55-74.

3. For a discussion of the relationship between social history and women's history, see Hilda Smith, "Women's History and Social History: An Untimely Alliance," *Organization of American Historians Newsletter* 12 (November 1984): 4-6. The term "hidden from history" is from the title of Sheila Rowbotham's *Hidden From History: Rediscovering Women in History From the 17th Century to the Present* (New York: Random House, 1973; Vintage Books, 1976).

4. Karen Payne, ed., *Between Ourselves: Letters Between Mothers and Daughters, 1750-1982* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1983), pp. xv-xvi.

5. J. H. Hexter, "The Ladies Were There All the Time," *New York Times Book Review*, 17 March 1946, p. 5.

6. Bernice Carroll, "Mary Beard's Woman as Force in History: A Critique," in *Liberating Women's History*, pp. 33-35.

7. References to the "women's culture" or "woman's sphere" may be found in many woman's history sources, including Gerda Lerner, "Placing Women in History," in *Liberating Women's History*, pp. 357-368; Carol Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth Century America," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1 (1975): 1-30; and Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

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# Livia Simpson Poffenbarger

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1862-1937

by Nancy Whear



*WOMAN of determination, self-confidence, and visible powers of persuasion, Livia Simpson Poffenbarger combined the best of the American conservative and liberal traditions. Raised in the Democratic Party, she became a national figure in the Republican Party. As a newspaper publisher, she was intensely concerned with contemporary affairs and the effect they would have on the future. Yet, she considered her own greatest triumph her ability to gain recognition for the historical importance of a battle fought almost 100 years before her birth. She created a synthesis of these and other contradictions without difficulty.*

*Livia Simpson Poffenbarger understood the role she was called upon to play in her community, her state, and her nation. At a time when women were very much dominated by men, she was willing to fight for her beliefs in the press, on lecture platforms, and in the smoke-filled rooms of political conventions. Her contributions to West Virginia, her ability to transcend barriers wherever she found them, and the sheer force of her accomplishments guarantee her place in the history of women and of our nation.*

There are a number of accounts of the West Virginia Democratic Convention in 1888 that stress that it was an unusually hard-fought and rowdy affair. Women were not voters, of course, and were generally not allowed at conventions, even as spectators. On this occasion, however, the attention of the whole assembly was gained by a young woman from Point Pleasant who demanded the floor. Her intent was to make a speech in support of the nomination of Judge John English of Mason County for a seat on the Supreme Court of Appeals. She "worked her way to the front and demanded recognition by the chair. Her hair came down, and when the chair ignored her . . . she went from delegation to delegation begging votes," according to one newspaper story.<sup>(1)</sup> Other reports of the scene vary in detail, but not in general effect. A particularly interesting description was written years later by one of the party leaders who had "quietly slated" another

candidate only to see him fall victim to a woman's oratory. The tone is quite cheerful considering the consternation he must have felt at the time:

She proceeded to make a riproaring, firescathing, screeching speech in favor of Judge English. Pretty soon the whole convention was in an uproar. . . . It was the worst hubbub I ever saw in a convention. There were yells to "put her out" and "stop her" and all the time she was serenely making one of the best nomination speeches I ever heard in a Democratic Convention. I do not believe that in my forty years of experience in conventions I ever saw the "plans of mice and men gang alee" [sic] to such an extent. . . . Judge English incidentally made a good judge.(2)

The young woman was Livia Nye Simpson of Point Pleasant, a former schoolteacher. At the time she was 26 years old, the eldest child of a well known and respected lawyer and "wheelhorse" of Democratic politics, George Perry Simpson. While newspapers around the state carried the story of the unusual goings-on at the convention, the hometown Democratic paper, the *Weekly Register*, did not find it newsworthy. Perhaps they knew Livia Simpson well enough in Point Pleasant not to find it extraordinary or surprising that she had waded deep into a man's domain without a qualm, had tackled and defeated a well-entrenched political machine, had supported a candidate strictly because he represented her county, and had displayed the oratorical flair necessary to command the attention and to sway the sentiment of a huge and unruly crowd. Maybe Mason County already knew what the state of West Virginia would learn, that "Anyone who had that lady enlisted in his cause was sure to go a considerable distance."(3)

Livia could hardly have found better training for swaying opinion with rhetoric or for sticking determinedly to a cause than from her own father. Perry Simpson was a trial lawyer *par excellence*, who, with his "vibrant ringing voice and splendid good humor carried all as a whirlwind before him."(4) His record in persuasion is impressive. He defended 48 capital cases, with the result that 47 of the accused were acquitted and the other served only one year. Though strongly partisan in politics, he was also known for fairness. Although he was a Union sympathizer, he campaigned vigorously throughout several states for the restoration of suffrage to Southerners after the war.(5)

Perry Simpson was himself the son of a lawyer, Judge Nathan Simpson, whose staunch Yankee wife first insisted that he free his slaves and then that he provide employment for them.(6) When Nathan, already in his late 30s and with a family to provide for, went to Cincinnati to study law, she gave her full support.(7) This first Livia Nye Simpson did not live to know her granddaughter, but something of her independent spirit certainly carried through to her namesake.

As a young lawyer, Perry Simpson was a partner in his father's firm in Pomeroy, Ohio. In 1866, he moved with his wife, Almeda Kennedy, and their young family across the river to Mason City, West Virginia, where he served as mayor. In 1872, they moved to Point



Pleasant, where he spent the rest of his life, his brilliant legal career more than matched by his reputation as a loving and generous person. His death at the age of 53 brought grief to the community, and his funeral was said to be the largest ever held there.(8)

The oldest of the five Simpson children, Livia Nye, was born March 1, 1862, while the family lived in Pomeroy. Her education, in public schools and with private tutors, included two years' study at her father's law firm, Simpson and Howard. Before the eventful year of 1888, she had taught school for four years and had saved the money that would enable her to begin the career that occupied her for the next quarter of a century.

Only a few months after her Democratic Convention coup, Livia Simpson invested her last dollar in the purchase of her town's failing Republican paper, the *State Gazette*. Against the advice of her friends, and midst the taunts of her enemies, she jumped with both feet into the publishing business. She later wrote of her beginnings as a publisher:

It was indeed a gloomy prospect when we walked into the old Franklin Building to take charge of an office badly pied, without a first-class printer, with Dave Ward in charge who had a wife and sick baby in a rear room and Dave drunk all the time he could get anything to drink. . . . [The] limited material that was set up looked . . . like it was set up with shoe pegs and printed with apple butter on a cheese press. . . .

After getting the first paper set . . . we found the paper up on time but the type so caked with dry ink as to be almost as hard as the lead itself. The type was first cleaned with coal oil, [then with] gasoline, and finally scrubbed with lye water. . . . Dave sat up all night to dry the forms. And on Friday morning the *State Gazette* was issued on time, December 21, 1888.(9)

Livia had apparently been writing for the paper before she bought it, for the valedictory of the former editor says that "her editorial ability is too widely and well-known to require any comment,(10) and a reprinted compliment from another paper mentioned that "she has for some time been editing the local department. . . ."(11)

At the outset, the new owner was listed as "Local Editor," and there was another "Editor-in-chief." Through the years, other names appeared with various titles—"managing editor" and so forth—with Livia Nye Simpson as "Publisher." But whoever else, by whatever title, was involved, there was never any question that she and she alone was in control of the operation and policy of the paper. Later she recalled that she "worked early and worked late . . . did all the local and editorial work, read exchanges, did the soliciting, made up mail, did the bookkeeping, and played the agreeable to callers."(12)

Not surprisingly, her apparent about-face from campaigning at a Democratic Convention to running a Republican newspaper was not accepted complacently by either party. An article in her paper a year later stated her own position as she vehemently responded to a snide attack from an out-of-town editor:



He suggests that our father correct us and make us less incorrigible. That same brilliant and brainy gentleman alludes to our being a Democratic participant in the state convention . . . and thinks that enough to pass the Democratic badge of servitude on us. . . . Was not that convention enough to disgust any sane person with democracy? We think we saw enough machine work there to do us for life. . . . When, by our efforts and the sturdy kick which the few honest men in that body made, the slate was broken, remember the howl that the bosses made? And were we not read out of the party, and didn't we go?(13)

After a few more lines of rather scathing description of the event and of the other editor's own behavior at it, she concluded with a declaration of independence:

As to our father correcting us, we will tell this lord of creation and oracle of Mud Creek that we are more than sweet sixteen, and if Pa will keep us in provision and clothes while we struggle through this vale of tears, this will be all we ask of "Colonel" Perry Simpson. . . .(14)

The convention and the purchase of the *Gazette* were not the only events of 1888 that were important to Livia Simpson. In that same season, a young lawyer, who was also to leave a mark on West Virginia history, won his first political election as sheriff of Mason County. He was George Poffenbarger, born November 24, 1861 and brought up on a farm in Mason County, near Point Pleasant. His early education was in the public schools, where he also taught for seven years, from 1880 until 1887.(15) While still teaching, he attended Rio Grande College and studied law with Judge John English. Licensed to practice law in 1887, George Poffenbarger then spent ten months in the West recuperating from overwork. He returned in the spring of 1888, refreshed and ready to join the political and legal scene.(16)

George Poffenbarger and Livia Nye Simpson were within five months of the same age; both were vitally involved in Republican politics and civic affairs; both were talented public speakers. Although it is not known when they first met, it is certain that they must have known each other very well and for many years before they eventually married.

The progress of the *State Gazette* was steady and impressive over the next few years. New printing equipment and type were added, and the subscription list grew. Mechanically, the paper moved from being set on a hand press to production on a cylinder press; from hand addressing the staff moved to the "latest improved mailer." There were several moves to larger and better quarters. In a summary of the first six years, the proud publisher wrote that her initial \$500 investment, with the added assumption of a \$700 debt, had developed into an operation worth several thousand dollars and was totally unencumbered. She reported that the four-page weekly was now a six-page semi-weekly (the first in the state), and was entirely home-produced. She affirmed her confidence in the future of Point Pleasant, admitting

that there had been tempting offers to move, and she thanked those members of both political parties who had supported her.(17)

The praise was not just self-congratulation. The sixth anniversary also brought accolades from other papers:

Considering the vicissitudes through which the *Gazette* passed in making the transition from a worthless, character-less and obscure sheet to a journal of prominence and ability in politics, business and live newspaperdom, its success has been brilliantly phenomenal. The *Gazette* reflects the characteristics of its presiding genius. It is wide awake, live, and energy is one of its most distinguished marks.(18)

The year 1894, which ended with this anniversary review, had been an extremely eventful one. The most important occurrence received little fanfare. Under the simple heading "MARRIED," the *Gazette* carried this note:

Last night, May 10, 1894, at the home of the bride's mother, Mrs. G. P. Simpson, Miss Livia N. Simpson to Mr. George Poffenbarger.(19)

That was the only notice printed in the bride's paper, while the Democratic paper, the *Weekly Register*, added a few lines to the basic facts, reporting that "the wedding was a quiet one, only relatives of the contracting parties being present," and adding its congratulations and hope "that our young friends may have a pleasant voyage." (20) Thus began a partnership that, allowing each member to pursue a separate and demanding vocation to the fullest, also combined talents to make a forceful and productive team for business, political, and civic enterprise.

The low-key wedding was not the only indication that marriage made little disruption in Livia's normal routine. The same issue of the *Register* announced that "Miss Mollie Simpson, accompanied by her sister, Mrs. George Poffenbarger, leaves Saturday for the Conservatory of Music, at Philadelphia, where she will have her voice cultivated." (21)

One reason for the quiet wedding may have been anticipation of the tragedy that occurred a few months later. Charles Simpson, the oldest of Livia's three brothers, had suffered for many years from consumption and had been for some time in a Washington, D. C., hospital. When it became obvious that he could not recover, he set out, accompanied by his wife and baby and his sister Mollie, to return home. Despite care and concern along the route, he died on the train. The despair and panic of the young women, with the baby along to add to their worry, can only be imagined. The impact on Livia can be judged in part from the fact that it was three weeks before she printed an eloquent and moving obituary for her brother, describing him as a talented artist, "possessed of great genius as a writer of prose and poetry," and a devoted music lover.(22)

The two Point Pleasant papers, the *State Gazette* and the *Weekly Register*, were strongly partisan and continually nipped at each other on political issues. They seemed, nevertheless, to have basic good will on a personal basis. Occasionally things really exploded, however, as

they did over the coverage of a Republican Convention by the *Register*, which said that "everything went smoothly . . . until the Queen, urged on by the Ring boss, got on the stage and threw the firebrand among the delegates in her uncalled for and savage attacks. . . ." (23) There were more references, in this and in other issues, to the "Queen," and to "bosses" and "the Ring," referring to Livia, her husband, and others in the party.

The editor of the *Gazette* did not take this assault lying down, but flailed at the *Register*: "The gall that could prompt the falsity and exaggeration and downright lying . . . is bitter indeed and shows how desperate the heelers and demagogues of a defunct party are becoming." (24) After several more sharp exchanges, each side blaming the other for starting the fight, Poffenbarger claimed that she had never attacked her rival personally, but that he "came at us with banners flying, blood in his eye, sounding the charge, giving the war-whoop, ready to fight, bleed and die in the cause of his high matters." (25)

On and on they wrangled, year after year, seeming, in truth, to enjoy the combat. Indeed, this political battle between parties seems mild-mannered when compared with the Republican against Republican battle that would rage a few years hence. Two things are clear at this point, however: even in 1894 Livia Simpson-Poffenbarger (26) was a political force in her own right; and she needed no assistance in the battle of words.

It is intriguing to speculate what feelings George Poffenbarger may have had as his bride was publicly lambasted with uncomplimentary epithets and as she slugged it out in the paper, giving as good as she got. She did hint a few years later what sort of adjustment he had to make:

[The writer] had practically made her way alone until [she married] George Poffenbarger . . . who determined to relegate the newspaper to the background. But the plunky woman has clung to the paper until it is a part of her very existence, finally convincing her husband that he has no more right to say she shall not run a newspaper, than she has to say, he shall preach. (27)

Family matters may have interfered with business just a little in 1898—long enough for the birth of a son, Nathan Simpson, on August 4th. Was it truth or a joke—the story Livia told her friends—that she had first thought she had a tumor and was surprised to find out it was Nathan? (28) It seems quite possible that becoming a mother at the age of 36 may have been a bit unexpected. The paper reflected a slight change that year, with someone else listed as city editor and manager, but her general supervision was still well evident.

There is no subject to which the name of Livia Simpson-Poffenbarger is more closely linked than that of the Battle of Point Pleasant, the basic engagement of "Lord Dunmore's War," fought on October 10, 1774. Nor is anyone more deserving of credit for the successful effort to provide a proper memorial to that war than she. Efforts to memorialize the location of the battle had begun at least as

early as 1848, with an attempt to get the U. S. Congress to provide for a monument. In 1860, a women's Monument Association took on the task of raising money for the same purpose and collecting information about the event from the many descendants of the combatants.(29) The Civil War disrupted this effort, and not until 1874 did anything substantial toward recognition of the importance of the battle occur.

Even then, the impetus may have come from outside the area: a long story, reprinted from a Charleston paper, described the filth and refuse at the burial area and the writer's "feeling of disgust at the cold neglect so plainly manifested."(30) Two months later, the *Register*, responding to a Charleston paper's suggestion of a Centennial Celebration, called for Mason County to take the lead.(31) The upshot was a splendid celebration on the anniversary date, with all the festive trimmings—a parade, speeches, ceremonies at the graves, and, most significant, earnest resolutions and plans to secure a monument before the next anniversary came round. Spirits and intentions soared. A committee, designated that day, met a few times; some money was contributed; the legislature duly appropriated more. There the matter sat. And sat.

There was an occasional stirring. Late in 1888, for instance, word came from Washington that there was a measure on the House calendar to provide for a monument.(32) In 1897, the West Virginia Legislature moved again with resolutions that a monument should be erected and that a committee should take charge of the funds that had accumulated.(33)

In April 1899, Livia Poffenbarger's paper urged the founding of chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and the Sons of the American Revolution to have as their specific goal the proper recognition of "the first battle of the Revolution."(34) In July of that year, the *Gazette* reprinted another out-of-town article that spoke of the burial place as "almost surrounded by stables and hog pens . . ."(35)

If there was no immediate follow-up at this time from Livia, perhaps she had been slowed somewhat by caring for an eight-month-old son while already expecting a second child. At any rate, the 125th anniversary of the battle came and went, and no particular notice was paid it.(36) Perry Simpson Poffenbarger was born six weeks later on November 24, 1899, his father's 38th birthday, thus completing the family of George and Livia Poffenbarger.

But all was not well with the new mother. Six weeks after the birth of Perry, the *Gazette* published the news that she had been taken to a hospital in Cincinnati, after it was found that she was not recovering at home, and that "her physician is hopeful and gives her friends encouragement for her ultimate recovery."(37) The *Register* also carried the story and a later one, the date of which indicates that she remained in the hospital at least three weeks.(38)

Another event of 1900, which certainly siphoned off some of his wife's energy, was the campaign and election of George Poffenbarger

to the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia. He had for many years been gaining attention in the Republican Party, "speaking in a large section of the State and participating in joint debates [in which he] demonstrated the superiority of his forensic and oratorical ability." (39) He defeated his old instructor, Judge English, and received the second-highest number of votes of any candidate for any office.(40)

In early 1901, just as George was assuming the new judicial duties that would require his absence from home most of the time, Livia was ready to drive for the memorial for the Battle of Point Pleasant, which she was convinced it deserved.

In February 1901, she sent the call again for the establishment of a DAR chapter. This time a local chapter was organized and functioning by spring and was chartered by the national organization in June.(41) No time was lost. The governor, at the bequest of the DAR chapter, appointed a three-man Monument Committee, and the women, under the leadership of Mrs. Poffenbarger and with the considerable help of her paper, urged them on. The first tasks were to choose the site (the "point" at the merger of the rivers, where the fort had stood and where many dead were buried), to purchase the land with the funds already available, and to clear it for a park. By Memorial Day, it was ready for a public ceremony involving the decoration of the graves. In September, the ground-clearing began in earnest, and an open citizens' meeting was called to plan for the anniversary celebration and dedication of the new memorial park.(42)

After all the false starts, the Point Pleasant community had been mobilized to claim the glory of their history. The dedication on October 10, 1901 was a total success. Ten thousand were reported in attendance at the celebration and ceremony. After several notable speakers, Livia Simpson-Poffenbarger, representing the DAR chapter, had the honor of addressing the huge crowd and naming the park. Her dedication closed with these remarks:

To the end, therefore, that history, as far as possible, may be fully preserved and patriotism, in its broadest sense may be recognized . . . we now dedicate this park . . . to patriotism and the preservation of history and name it "Tu-Endie-Wei Park," which signifies in the Shawnee tongue "the mingling of waters." . . .(43)

One sideline story from the preparation for the dedication must be retold from Livia's own account. It concerns an ancient public house in the park area, dating from 1796. The building was badly deteriorated and being torn down, despite the pleas of a few to leave it standing. To avoid Mrs. Poffenbarger's continued protest, the workers managed to heave a good portion of it over the riverbank while she was at lunch. Fortunately, the idea of using the building as a temporary museum at the coming celebration stopped the demolition, whereupon "Mrs. Poffenbarger secured a team of horses and by means of ropes and chains transferred the logs from over to on top of the bank and built them back in place." She was to save it from destruction once again after the 1913 flood, and today the Mansion House, as it is now called,

is the chapter house of the DAR and, as a museum, is an essential part of the park's attraction.(44)

The next goal was a monument. In 1905, the U.S. Senate passed an appropriation bill, but it went no further. Attention then turned to the state legislature, which, under earnest persuasion from Mrs. Poffenbarger as well as from the official Monument Committee, approved appropriations that were to be spread over several years.

Every year the matter came before Congress, which had a policy against financing monuments outside Washington. The senator proposing the appropriation had little faith that it would succeed and offered his own donation if the request to Congress could be dropped; the congressman pushing for it agreed with him. But Mrs. Poffenbarger's response showed clearly that the real importance of a Congressional appropriation was not monetary:

We do not ask that the Congress of the United States build the Battle Monument at Point Pleasant because the funds cannot be raised [elsewhere] but because we want the Government to officially recognize the battle as it was . . . a battle of the Revolution, indeed, the First Battle of the Revolution, and no matter how insignificant the appropriation, if the bill correctly states its status we will be content to raise the money. . . .(45)

The "First Battle" debate, in brief, hinges on whether, as its advocates believe, Lord Dunmore intended to weaken the cause of colonial rebellion by placing a large force in jeopardy from an unexpected Indian battle at which he conveniently failed to appear with supporting forces, or whether it was an important white man/Indian conflict, the last one in which colonial forces fought under the British flag, standing between the colonial and the revolutionary periods.

Against the advice of Virgil Lewis (the State Historian and Archivist, a Mason Countian, and descendent of a battle participant), who thought it wiser not to "array against us the whole of New England where the people are jealous of the claims of Lexington" or to let a Congressional committee make the judgment, Livia insisted on the Revolutionary designation.(46) Her determination triumphed when, in 1908, Congress passed the desired bill, appropriating \$10,000 for the monument "to commemorate the Battle of the Revolution fought at that point."(47)

Perhaps no other feat so well demonstrated a description once written about her method of getting action: "She called upon her man, who had two alternatives: to give up at once and promise to do or vote the way she asked, or he could hold out until all defenses collapsed and finally succumb. . . ."(48)

With the funds assured, the Monument Committee proceeded with plans for the monument, which would include a granite obelisk over 80 feet high and a statue of a rugged colonial militiaman. This time hundreds of person from all over West Virginia and from Ohio and Virginia served on the dozen or so planning committees for the gala four-day celebration of the unveiling. In early August, the main



structure was assembled and under the capstone were placed a number of appropriate mementos, including an unfinished copy of Livia Poffenbarger's new book, *The Battle of Point Pleasant, First Battle of the Revolution*. (49)

A crowd of 30,000 enjoyed the four-day celebration, which culminated in the unveiling ceremony on October 9, 1909, with a memorial program the following day. The governor and other public figures, along with many descendants of the colonial combatants, participated in the huge parade and other festivities. Among the speakers was Livia Simpson-Poffenbarger.

Throughout the years in which the campaign for recognition of "The Battle" was taking so much attention, there were still family and household obligations, new business ventures (the dynamic new Point Pleasant Development Company was but one of them), and a newspaper to be run. This last occupation took on new spice with the appearance of a new and definitely opposition weekly, the *Mason Republican*. This was a radically prohibitionist paper whose secondary goal seemed from the outset to be to oppose the political power of Livia and George Poffenbarger. Every issue contained ugly swipes at one or both of them, with frequent references to "the Liquor Gazette," the "Ninnysquaw press," "The Supreme Liquor Judge," and similarly denigrating phrases.

The *Gazette*, a veteran of years of verbal warfare with the *Register*, was not lacking in skill at the sharp retort: "Ninnysquaw," for instance, was countered with "rag-chewing Ninny hammer." As for its position on prohibition, the *Gazette* (and the Poffenbargers) did favor the "local option" law then in force. There were occasional editorials presenting the arguments on both sides, but clearly finding against prohibition on a number of grounds, including the financial and employment loss it would bring, the question of freedom of choice, and the belief that there would be more, not less, drinking if it were driven outside the law. (50)

The *Mason Republican* accused the Poffenbargers of political bossism and claimed that George had "allied himself with the Democratic whisky gang" and that he had "sidetracked his wife as a boss [for fear the party] would not stand for a petticoat boss." (51)

The attacks on George Poffenbarger, who was steadily building a distinguished record as judge, seem especially vicious, since his position inhibited his openly meeting the charges. It was a governor of the opposing party who called him "one of the ablest judges in the history of the Court" and added that "his honesty has been above suspicion." (52) During his long tenure on the bench, he earned a place in West Virginia history, particularly for several important reforms in the procedures of the court and for several landmark decisions.

In 1912, Livia Simpson-Poffenbarger became an adviser to the Republican National Convention, the first of a number of national positions she would hold in that party. In the fall, the voters of West Virginia, by a margin of 92,000 votes, passed an amendment to the



state constitution forbidding the manufacture and sale of liquor, the so-called "Prohibition Amendment." At the same election, despite the Anti-Saloon League's threats to bury him, George Poffenbarger was elected by a comfortable margin to a second 12-year term on the state's highest judicial body.(54)

Toward the end of that year, in response to a new legal requirement, the *State Gazette* published its annual "statement of ownership":

Editor: Livia Simpson-Poffenbarger

Managing Editor: Livia Simpson-Poffenbarger

Business Manager: Livia Simpson-Poffenbarger

Publisher: Livia Simpson-Poffenbarger

Owner: Livia Simpson-Poffenbarger

No mortgage or indebtedness.(55)

This announcement came very nearly at the end of Livia's newspaper career. To understand how she had been able to balance these responsibilities with all her other projects and responsibilities, it would be helpful to take a more personal look at the woman and also at the rest of her family and household.

Those who remember Livia Poffenbarger picture her as typically standing on a streetcorner engaged in intense conversation, her face thrust close to the person she was talking to. She was short, a little dumpy in figure, a little frumpy in dress—much too busy, usually, to care about appearances. Nevertheless, she could entertain with great ease and style, playing gracious hostess to dignitaries and political figures from out of town, as well as to the social set of Point Pleasant. But her circle of acquaintances encompassed people of all social levels, from governors and senators to those in the "lower" occupations. She brooked no criticism about her associations, as a story her son tells illustrates: Her friends chided her because they had seen her "walking down Capitol Street" with someone when "everybody in town knows she's a prostitute." "Yes," snapped Livia, "and everybody in town knows I'm not."(56)

She was not one to wait patiently for things to get done. When a labor dispute halted work on a new *Gazette* building, she put on work clothes and started hauling the brick herself.(57) When asked once why she was washing windows a few hours before she was to speak in public, she retorted that she was "tired of waiting for someone else to do it."(58) As the self-appointed supervisor for a city project to clear the old Pioneer Cemetery (so named after she called it that in her reports to City Council), she became so ill from poison oak (of which eight wagon-loads were removed) that it "nearly cost her her life."(59) Visitors to her home remember her reading galley proofs on Sunday afternoon, or, when there was nothing else to take up her nervous energy, doing endless tatting, with "her fingers flying."(60)

George Poffenbarger was, of course, away from home most of the time, his job demanding that he be in Charleston. He came home by train on weekends, sang in the choir, and taught a Sunday School class at the Presbyterian Church.(61) An extremely handsome man, he is

remembered as being quiet, kindly, and exuding the dignity appropriate to a judge.

A very important member of the household was Livia's younger sister, Mollie (Mary Margaret) Simpson Bryan. Having lost her husband, she, along with her daughter Natalie, lived in the Poffenbarger home and virtually ran it. The children—Natalie, Nathan, and Perry—were brought up like brothers and sister under the day-to-day supervision and strict discipline of Mrs. Bryan, and "it worked out very well," according to Perry Poffenbarger.(62) Mollie was a trained singer and a popular music teacher in the public schools. In the grand parade at the unveiling of the Battle Monument, she was responsible for one of the crowd's favorite displays: the school children, wearing red, white, and blue capes and caps, were arranged to form an American flag that streamed through the streets.(63) A housekeeper and her daughter, who lived in a cottage adjacent to the Poffenbarger house, completed the extended household.

An outside influence on the family was Livia's younger brother, Dr. John Nathan Simpson, whose name is also famous as the organizer and first dean of the West Virginia University Medical School.(64) An educator and bachelor (until his late 30s), "he had lots of ideas about how they should bring up the children." One of these was that the boys should attend a private school known for producing Rhodes scholars. The experiment lasted a year, after which time they came back to the public schools of Point Pleasant.(65)

The great flood of 1913, which hit hard at towns along the Ohio River, provides some choice glimpses of the Poffenbarger family during less serious moments. The water came up 56 inches in their home, but, like other families, they merely moved to the second floor, from which they could "look down and see the newel post going."(66) Transportation in town was by boat, which hardly slowed down a determined journalist. Mrs. Poffenbarger went all over town, piloted by an employee who owned a skiff, sometimes inviting young friends of the family to accompany her. One of these, Cary Howard (now Rayburn), still tells with a sparkle how she and her sister were sent for and invited to stay at the Poffenbarger's because the boys were "driving [Mrs. Poffenbarger] crazy"; how they were escorted through the window into the boat; how they lived "high on the hog" with hot biscuits and ham dinners delivered from the boatman's home; and especially how, on a warm night, they all crawled out a bedroom window onto the porch roof:

We sat lined up—Mrs. Poffenbarger, the judge, Natalie, Nathan, Perry, and me—all lined up with our backs to the building, with our feet sticking out. People were going by in skiffs, and you could hear those oars, and the waves lapping—sitting out there at night. And we sang! And Mrs. Poffenbarger and the judge were singing along with us—"Sweet Adeline," and "In the Good Old Summertime" and all that stuff.(67)

At the end of 1913, exactly 25 years after its purchase, the *State*

*Gazette* was sold without fanfare or farewell, although Livia continued for years to write occasional special articles for it and also for the *Weekly Register*.(68) A major history of West Virginia, published that same year, said of her that "Mrs. Poffenbarger is not only the most widely-known of any woman in West Virginia, but enjoys an acquaintance with eminent men and women that is nationwide."(69)

Late in 1917, the Poffenbargers moved to Charleston, where George still sat on the Supreme Court of Appeals and where they were already well known. The new location was to give Livia a broader range for her political and patriotic activities, which reached a peak during World War I.

Next to her accomplishments regarding the Battle of Point Pleasant, the feat for which Livia Poffenbarger received the greatest acclaim was her outstanding organization of West Virginia women in the Liberty Loan campaigns during the war. Her plan was so efficient that it was adopted by large cities throughout the nation.(70) In the Third Campaign (the first that she headed), the women raised over \$10,000,000, 48% of the state's total.(71) This was the major achievement for which she received an honorary LLD from West Virginia University. The occasion was the school's 50th anniversary in 1919, and the other degree recipients included the sitting governor and six ex-governors.(72)

An important wartime organization was the Four Minute Men, a sort of patriotic speaker's bureau. Discussing the women who were commissioned as "Four Minute Speakers," the state chairman concluded that "without disparagement to the others, it may be said Mrs. George Poffenbarger . . . who toured the state under the direction of the organization, was especially effective. . . .(73) If her speechmaking was notable, so was her penchant for attracting a crowd, a memorable example of which was the time she spoke in downtown Charleston from the back of an elephant.(74)

Public speaking was second nature to Livia Poffenbarger, but, in this period, the demand for her services, particularly on patriotic or historical subjects, increased in number and in geographical area. There were other subjects too, such as the First Good Roads Bond of West Virginia campaign.(75) In 1925, she delivered the dedication speech at the unveiling of a monument to the veterans of the war,(76) and during the campaign of Herbert Hoover she stumped the state in his behalf and in support of the gold standard—an issue that had been around since her early newspaper days.(77)

Among the more than two dozen organizations and boards to which Mrs. Poffenbarger belonged,(78) the ones that brought her the greatest national recognition were Republican, including that party's National Women's Advisory Council of One Hundred, National Executive Committee (Associate), and National Speakers' Bureau. One of her Republican offices, however, that of State Director for the West Virginia Suffrage Campaign, presents a paradox: despite the title, there is little evidence that she gave real support to this cause. In fact, she is

quoted as quipping that women's suffrage "would just mean more votes to buy."(79) And yet, in addition to the model of her own career, there are many examples in her writings and in her actions of her support for women's opportunities. There is no doubting the evidence in the 1894 story from the *Gazette*, which already had a "lady" editor and two women compositors and had now "come smiling to the front with the first lady forewoman of a newspaper in the state."(80) In the article describing the paper's first six years, she expressed her conviction that business was open to women and that "if we have encouraged one woman to overcome adversity our work has not been in vain."(81)

Rounding out the last years of her life were some of the same topics that had absorbed her early years. When Prohibition, which she had heartily opposed early in the century, became a serious issue again, she served as Vice-Chairman in West Virginia for the Women's Organization for National Prohibition Reform, a group important for successfully casting a "mantle of respectability" over the anti-prohibition movement.(82) She was then 70 years old.

The major goal of her public life, to seek full recognition for the Battle of Point Pleasant, was a vital issue to the end of her life. In 1928, she wrote the article on that subject for the official *West Virginia Tour Guide*. In her last years, she was president of the governor-appointed Point Pleasant Battle Monument Commission, and the records of that committee show that as late as May 1936, when she was 74, she was eagerly distributing copies of her 1909 book to the Library of Congress and to historians and historical organizations, trying to broaden acceptance of the "first battle" position.(83) The final project, which she had high hopes of completing, was to get an appropriation to have the names of all known battle participants placed on the monument.

Viewing the extraordinary variety of roles and accomplishments of Livia Simpson Poffenbarger, it is understandable that when she died on October 27, 1937, after an illness of several months, the newspapers would be hard-pressed to describe her succinctly in a caption. Some of the headings they used were "Famous West Virginia Woman," "Historian," "Civic Leader," "Lawyer," "Editor," "Republican Leader," "Author," "Politician," "Feminine GOP Leader." They were all correct. West Virginia papers carried the news of her death on their front pages, and it was also reported in the *New York Times*.(84) The governor, a Democrat, immediately released a long testimonial, saying, in part, that "perhaps no person has contributed more to the appreciation of West Virginia history than she," and praising her "dynamic personality," and her presentation of causes as being "as effective and convincing as any that I have heard."(85) Among other notables in legal, journalistic, historical, and political fields who honored her memory by serving as pall-bearers at her funeral were the sitting governor and three former governors.

The writer for the *Charleston Daily Mail*, which devoted nearly three full columns to a review of her life and contributions, expressed

as eloquently as anyone what she had meant to her state:

It is doubtful if the state of West Virginia ever produced a more positive personality or a more energetic individual than Mrs. Poffenbarger. Certainly she had no equal among her contemporaries. With her passing the state and national fields of literature, historical research, politics and genealogy lost not only a patron but an active participant.<sup>(86)</sup>

If Livia Simpson Poffenbarger "had no equal among her contemporaries," it is quite possible that she has had none in the intervening half-century. With a life devoted to memorializing West Virginia history, she has become a part of that history.

### ENDNOTES

1. *Wheeling Intelligencer*, 18 August 1888.
2. William A. MacCorkle, *The Recollections of Fifty Years of West Virginia* (New York: Putnam, [1928]), pp. 163-164. Another account of this incident, besides those in several newspapers, can be found in George W. Summers, *Pages from the Past*, (Charleston: Charleston Journal, 1935), p. 89, (also reprinted in *West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, XXI, 219).
3. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
4. George W. Atkinson, ed., *Bench and Bar of West Virginia*, (Charleston: Virginian Law Book Co., 1919), p. 294. This work contains a rather full biography and portrait of George Perry Simpson.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Perry Simpson Poffenbarger, telephone interview, 25 June 1983. I am very grateful to Mr. Poffenbarger for his generosity in sharing personal recollections and for the very essential verification of many facts. I am also indebted to Cary Howard Rayburn and the other DAR members (listed in the bibliography) for wonderful hospitality and extremely fruitful interviews at Point Pleasant; to the West Virginia Department of Archives and History, especially Head Reference Librarian Mary Jenkins; and to my colleague Cora Teel, for unmeasurable support, in both tangible and intangible ways.
7. Atkinson, p. 292.
8. *Weekly Register* (Point Pleasant), 20 December 1892. See also Atkinson, p. 295. All 11-page typescript on the life of her father, also reprinting eulogies from others, is to be found in the *Livia Simpson Poffenbarger Collection* (Ms. 80-287, folder 33), Department of Archives and History, Charleston, WV.
9. *State Gazette* (Point Pleasant), 21 December 1894.
10. *Ibid.*

11. *Gazette*, 11 January 1889.
12. *State Gazette: Illustrated Industrial Edition*, (Point Pleasant, 1905). This 52-page supplement is later listed as *Industrial and Biographical Point Pleasant*; the latter name does not appear anywhere in the publication, however. It is a valuable source of information about Point Pleasant, its history and its people. Livia Simpson Poffenbarger is also listed as its author, although not in the publication.
13. *Gazette*, 1 January 1889. The typescript about Perry Simpson mentioned in note eight quotes him as frequently saying, "I will care for them while I am here and will leave them capable of caring for themselves when I am gone." The political parties were commonly spelled without capital letters in the newspapers. Also the term "democracy" referred to party.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Who Was Who in America*, Vol. IV, 1961-1968 (Chicago: Marquis, 1968). [Cautionary note: the date of death is incorrect in this source. It should be 20 March 1951 (not 1941)]. Other biographical sketches are found in Atkinson, pp. 144-147, and in every issue of the *West Virginia Legislative Handbook and Manual* (the "Blue Book") from 1916 to 1922.
16. *Gazette; Ill. Indus. Ed.*, p. 53.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 40; *Gazette*, 21 December 1894.
18. *Evening Mail* (Charleston), reprinted in *Gazette*, 1 January 1895.
19. *Gazette*, 11 May 1894.
20. *Register*, 16 May 1894.
21. *Ibid.* The "cultivation" was apparently accomplished quickly, for the following January there were regular notices in the *Gazette* that she was home from "the famous Broad St. Conservatory in Philadelphia" and would take vocal students.
22. *Gazette*, 14 September 1894. The *Register's* obituary (29 August 1894) was also eloquent and complimentary. Charles was born 4 December 1863, died 21 August 1894.
23. *Register*, 12 September 1894.
24. *Gazette*, 14 September 1894.
25. *Gazette*, 5 October 1894.
26. All through the years she lived in Point Pleasant, Mrs. Poffenbarger hyphenated her name: "Livia Simpson-Poffenbarger." In some early writings (*Gazette Ill. Indus. Ed.*) for example, she also hyphenated the names of her sons, both of whom had "Simpson" for a middle name. Beginning about 1918, or about when she moved to Charleston, her name appears without the hyphen.
27. *Gazette Ill. Indus. Ed.*, p. 40.
28. Cary Howard Rayburn, interview 24 May 1983, Point Pleasant, WV.



29. Livia Simpson-Poffenbarger, *The Battle of Point Pleasant; First Battle of the Revolution*, (Point Pleasant: State Gazette, 1909) pp. 95-97. See also Virgil A. Lewis, *History of the Battle of Point Pleasant*, (Charleston: Tribune Printing Co., 1909) pp. 75-76.
30. *Register*, 19 March 1874, quoting from *Charleston Courier* (n.d.) reprinted in Poffenbarger, *Battle*, p. 98.
31. *Ibid.*, 17 May 1874, reprinted in Poffenbarger, *Battle*, p. 100.
32. *Register*, 5 December 1888.
33. HJR 26, adopted 19 February 1897; HJR 34, adopted 26 February 1897. See *Acts Passed by the Legislature of West Virginia at its Twenty-seventh Regular Session*, (Charleston: Forsyth, 1897).
34. Poffenbarger, *Battle*, p. 112.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 110-111.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
37. *Gazette*, 9 January 1900.
38. *Register*, 24 January 1900.
39. *Manual of West Virginia* (Charleston: Secretary of State, 1908), p. 152.
40. *Ibid.*
41. Poffenbarger, *Battle*, p. 112. See also Juliette Boyer Baker, ed., *West Virginia State History of the Daughters of the American Revolution*, (n.p., 1928), pp. 86-88. Mrs. Poffenbarger was founder, first Regent of the chapter, and later Honorary Life Regent. Named for Colonel Charles Lewis, one of the first to die in the Battle of Point Pleasant, it was the second chapter in the state. Livia Poffenbarger was active in the chapter long after her move to Charleston. A plaque on her home indicates the founding of the chapter there. The significance to the DAR of officially designating the battle as the first of the Revolution is self-evident.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 113-115.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 121. Mrs. Poffenbarger also called the name "the first it has been known to possess . . ." Virgil Lewis tells quite a different tale, saying that he had spoken sometime earlier to the DAR mentioning Indian words and telling them that the Wyandotte word for "triangular point of land at the confluence of river" (not a specific spot) was *Tu-enda-we*, and that the ladies had thought it would be a good name for the park. In brief, he disputes the origin, the meaning, the spelling and the pronunciation. See Lewis, *Battle*, fn. p. 81.
44. Livia Simpson-Poffenbarger, *The Mansion House*, (unpublished typescript in the possession of Marshall University, Special Collections, Vertical File "Cities-Point Pleasant"), pp. 11, 13-14.
45. Poffenbarger, *Battle*, p. 131.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 115. Lewis went even further in his book on the battle, refuting his own earlier acceptance of the "first battle" idea, which he had grown up



with and had read in earlier West Virginia histories. His *History of the Battle of Point Pleasant*, which came out almost simultaneously with Mrs. Poffenbarger's, covers some of the same ground, but is based mostly on very detailed search of primary materials and comes to quite the opposite conclusion.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

48. *Daily Mail* (Charleston), 28 October 1937.

49. This book has supplied most of the foregoing information about the battle and the attempts to memorialize it. It contains, in addition, the list of all known participants with biographies of many of them and a number of eyewitness accounts of the battle. A copy of the *Illustrated Industrial Edition* was also placed under the capstone by the two young Poffenbarger boys, Nathan and Perry, and their cousin Natalie Bryan.

50. *Gazette*, 23 April 1908; 7 May 1908.

51. *Mason Republican*, Point Pleasant, 15 May 1908. Unlike relations with the *Register*, the enmity between the *Gazette* and the *Republican* affected personal lives: George Harper, whose father (of the same name) edited the latter paper for awhile, recalls being chased away from the Poffenbarger yard (though he was friendly with Perry) and Perry Poffenbarger allows that "that was probably true." (Interview of 25 June 1983).

52. MacCorkle, p. 163.

53. Atkinson, p. 144.

54. *West Virginia Legislative Handbook and Manual*, John T. Harris, ed. (Charleston: Tribune Pr., 1916), pp. 722-723. He resigned 31 December 1922.

55. *Gazette*, 24 August 1912.

56. Perry Poffenbarger, 25 June 1983.

57. *Charleston Daily Mail*, 28 October 1937.

58. *Ibid.*

59. LSP Collection, Ms. 80-287, folder 3. Typed notation attached to clipping about cemetery, initialed "LSP."

60. Rayburn, 24 May 1983.

61. Perry Poffenbarger, 25 June 1983; Rayburn, 24 May 1983.

62. Perry Poffenbarger, 25 June 1983.

63. Perry Poffenbarger was one of 13 boys who rode in a decorated wagon representing the 13 colonies in the parade.

64. William T. Doherty and Festus P. Summers, *West Virginia University: Symbol of Unity in a Sectionalized State* (Morgantown: WVU Press, 1982), pp. 86, 99. See also *Who Was Who in America*. John Simpson died in 1947.

65. Perry Poffenbarger, 25 June 1983.

66. *Ibid.*

67. Rayburn, 24 May 1983. Mrs. Rayburn wrote about this same episode in a charming article about the Poffenbargers and the Virgil Lewis family at the time of the bicentennial ("Recollections of Two 'Great' Mason Countians," in *Point Pleasant Register*, 14 June 1974, pp. 12, 27). I preferred to quote from the interview with her. The Howard sisters were close to the Poffenbarger household for many years. Mrs. Poffenbarger encouraged "Poff" (Nathan) to "date" Cary, who was a few years older, knowing that "it'd be safe—that is, he'd get over it, which he did."—CHR

68. Samples of these special articles can be found in her manuscript collection, which consists of the contents of 42 scrapbooks, mostly of newspaper clippings of historical and genealogical articles, but also containing some manuscripts. Two signed articles from the Point Pleasant papers include "A Message to Mothers" from the *Register* in 1917 (a message of courage on the day the draft names were listed) and "Local Citizenship" from the *Gazette* in 1916, about the "dawn of a new era in Point Pleasant."

69. Thomas Condit Miller and Hu Maxwell, *West Virginia and Its People* (New York: Lewis Historical Pub. Co., 1913) II, p. 294.

70. Morris Shawkey, *West Virginia in History, Life, Literature and Industry* (Chicago: Lewis Pub. Co., 1928) II, pp. 83-84.

71. James Morton Callahan, *History of West Virginia Old and New* (Chicago: The American Historical Sol., 1923), I, p. 702.

72. Doherty, *WVU*, p. 118.

73. There were over 1,000 Four Minute Men in West Virginia, with fewer than 50 women. They spoke where there were ready-made audiences—theaters, lodges, churches, picnics, in stores, and in factories. (See *WV Legis. Handbook*, 1918, p. 912).

74. Perry Poffenbarger, 12 July 1983.

75. *Daily Mail*, 28 October 1925.

76. *Ibid.*

77. Perry Poffenbarger, 25 June 1983.

78. Lists of her memberships may be found in *Who Was Who* (or *Who's Who in America* from 1924 until her death) and in Miller and Maxwell *West Virginia*, II, pp. 294-295.

79. Perry Poffenbarger, 1 June 1983.

80. *Gazette*, 16 April 1894.

81. *Gazette*, 21 December 1894.

82. Grace C. Root, *Women and Repeal; the Story of the Women's Organization for National Prohibition Reform* (New York: Harper, 1934) pp. 43, 210.

83. West Virginia Department of Archives and History, ARI711.

84. The newspaper obituaries, dated 28 October 1937, that were available were: *Charleston Daily Mail*; *Charleston Gazette*; *Huntington Advertiser*; *Huntington*

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85. *Daily Mail*, 28 October 1937.

86. *Ibid.*

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8.35

# Aunt Jenny Wilson

1900-

by Janet Gamble Greene



*UNT Jenny Wilson of Logan County, West Virginia, is a nationally-known folk artist who plays traditional banjo. She is important to West Virginia's traditional culture through her music, storytelling, and quilting.*

*But Aunt Jenny is also much more than a folk artist. Like thousands of other women in West Virginia, she is the widow of a coal miner. Her life began on February 9, 1900, and the experiences that she relates in the following pages are representative of the working class women who have lived and worked in the industrial coalfields of West Virginia since the early years of mining in this century.*

*While Aunt Jenny's public performances and recordings focus on the traditional culture of the years before coal mining became the dominant way of life in the southern counties, this chapter tells another part of her story.*

I always said, "I'll never marry a miner." My youngest brother, he was a contractor and he laid track for the mines. I'd be around jobs where he was, and I'd see where they'd had accidents and miners got killed. And buddy, that's one thing—I'll never marry a miner. But then I did.(1)

When Virginia Ellis married her miner—J. D. Wilson—in 1918, coal miners were still something of a novelty in Logan County. The first mines had opened for commercial operation in 1904, and, with this new industrial work, came a new way of life. The number of mine workers grew from 1,005 in 1907 to 13,079 in 1921.(2)

Virginia Ellis was born to the old way. Her parents, Dock and Cinderella Ellis, had a farm above what is now Chief Logan State Park. Her life was much like that of other women living on farms in the Appalachian region before the coal boom began.

You know, there was a woman asked me down at Marshall University one time—it was a class on Appalachian Culture and that's what I had gone down there for. She wanted to know how it was washin' on the washboard, and all of that stuff, and was it

hard work. And I said, "Well, I'll tell ya'," I said, "If young women had to do today what the older women done back then, they would commit suicide."

I have washed clothes on a scrub board 'til the skin would be off my knuckles. Yes, sir. You carry the water and boil it, and then you boil your clothes, and you take and you wash 'em through two waters, and then you put 'em in and boil 'em, and then take 'em out of there and put 'em in your rinse water and rinse 'em through two waters. And I say that clothes were more sanitary then than they are now.

Virginia, or Jenny, was the youngest of eleven children. "I was very popular before I got married. I had a whole gang of boyfriends. I was the ugliest thing you ever saw. I was skinny—about as big around as your arm." Ugly or not, Jenny was talented. Her brother Jesse taught her to play the banjo in the traditional mountain style. "Back then, in such a large family before radio and TV, as the hippies say, we had to do our own thing." She started playing music at the age of nine.(3)

Jenny played for dances all over Logan County, as well as at home with her family. The story of her first square dance was made famous in a recording from a concert she gave at Warren Wilson College in North Carolina and included on her record album, *Billy Edd Wheeler Presents A Portrait of Aunt Jenny Wilson*. (4) The music was fine at that dance, and so was the fighting.

I never seen such fightin' in all the days of my life. And it was right between us and the door . . . And I just set there with the banjo wonderin' who'd get killed and didn't even think about myself, you know . . . Knives a-flashing everywhere and people—men and women—fightin'.

After a near-miss, when Jenny thought she was shot, she left the dance.

I'm tellin' you the truth. I took out of there runnin'. I knowed I run for a country mile . . . The first house I went in . . . right there I stayed 'til daylight. Then I was thinkin', 'Lord, what can I tell when I get home.' And not darin' to tell what'd happened or I'd certainly been restricted when there was another dance. I began to think kinda—it was excitin', you know—that I'd like to take in another one or two.(5)

Jenny played at many other dances, but when she married in 1918, she gave up the banjo.

"Musicians were not well thought of back then," says Roger Bryant, Jenny's grandson and musical partner. "People thought if you played music you wouldn't work. Then, too, it was such a hard life, people didn't have time to sit around and play music."(6)

The hard life of the farm was exchanged for the hard life of the coal camps when Jenny married and set up housekeeping on Crooked Creek in a camp owned by E. R. Johnson Coal Company. After about a year, the family moved to Henlawson, a short distance away, where



they lived for the next nine years.

In 1921, the famous mine war in Logan County spilled over into Crooked Creek just above Henlawson.(7)

You know, it really got bad at that time when they had the mine war. I was expecting my second child. I was scared to death. I lived down there in the camp at Henlawson, and, you know, I could see them planes going over and everything. You see, we had a sheriff here at that time named Don Chafin, and he got so much a ton on the coal—so I've been told—to keep the union out. And, on the other side of the ridge, it was organized labor. So they tried to come over, right at the head of this hollow [Crooked Creek] and on Blair Mountain and all around, so they tell me. There were several men killed.

My husband worked in the mines down there right on through it, and they would come and take some of the miners out and deputize them to fight against the union. But Jim, he stayed back of it.

But oh, Lord! I think everybody wanted the union to come in. Because the men—they would work, as they say, from daylight 'til dark for maybe two dollars and fifty cents. And lots of miners was working around here days for maybe two dollars a day. So they wanted a union.

My husband made more than a lot of the men did. He was runnin' a machine when we got married, and he wasn't quite 20 years old. He went to work in the mines right here back in these hills when he was fourteen years old. I don't know what it was—they called it trappin'.(8)

Trapping was an occupation usually reserved for children in the mines, many of these children hired as young as the age of eight. John Brophy, a leader in the United Mine Workers Union during the 1920s, describes the job in his autobiography, *A Miner's Life*. A trapper was a "... door tender, opening and closing the doors which controlled ventilation [in the mine], for the mine cars and for miners going to and from their work."(9)

The mine owners kept the union at bay in Logan County until the mid-1930s. Meanwhile, Jenny and her family moved often as her husband followed work.

He worked hard—he did everything there was to be done around the mine, I've heard him say. We moved all over the state of West Virginia—Henlawson to Coal River to Three Forks at the Head of Big Buffalo, and all over. Just wherever the mines was workin', that's where we went.

Each move meant adjusting to a new company town or coal camp. The camps were administered and governed by the companies for one purpose: coal mining.(10) Anything that interfered with mining, whether it be pro-union activity, family squabbles, or drunkenness, was treated harshly by most camp administrators, often by eviction. Aunt Jenny developed her own way of maneuvering in the camps.

The bigger the job you had, the better the house you got. They had what they called a bosses' camp, and then they had a camp for just the coal miners off away from the bosses' camp. And then on above there was a camp for black people, which was called the colored camp.(11)

You know, if I moved in one of them bad houses, I wouldn't be there very long until I got a good house. If you wasn't a troublesome person . . . why then if a better house became empty, you could go and see about gettin' it.

Some places, it was the manager, sometimes you went to the bookkeeper, and if you was liked, you didn't cause much trouble in the camp and your husband was a good worker, nine times out of ten, you would get the house. And that way, I always kept on the good side of the company until I could get the house I was pitchin' for.

My husband made his mine foreman certificate when he was 22, but he didn't always boss. He was an electrician, too, but what he enjoyed most was runnin' a machine because, back then, you made more money doing that than you did anything else. When you was hired as a machine runner, you would live right along just the same as the coal loaders, track men, and motor-men.(12) But when you was hired as a key man—as boss—you would stand a show to get a choice house.

The best houses in the camp they called Silk-Stockin' Row. That's where the middle class people lived. You'd live right there as long as your husband worked at that company. But you better not let your house get all messed and dirty around it.

The majority of miners' houses were two, three, or four rooms.(13) They were serviceable, but barren, and usually had no foundations, running water, or indoor toilets. They were rented by the companies for one dollar per room per month.(14) Maintenance was at the whim of the company. Aunt Jenny described what the living conditions meant for women in the coal camps.

The regular miners' houses didn't have a bath in it. There was usually two pumps—one in each end of the camp. You packed back water. That is some job with children. You bathed 'em in a big number 3 of Z wash tub; that was how you bathed yourself, too.

[For cooking] I had a coal stove that nearly everyone had. They had a water tank on the side of it that would heat water. That way I had hot water nearly all the time to wash dishes, but when women would go to wash clothes, they would have to build up a fire out in the yard—put the tub up on bricks, you know. I was married about a year before I ever had a washer. The first 'en I ever had was a second-handed Maytag. I washed on a board before that.

Some people had a big problem with dirty diapers, but I never did. We had cloth diapers, and, if we lived close to a creek,

I would take 'em out to the creek and wash 'em all out, then just throw 'em up over a line and let 'em dry, then put 'em right back in with the rest of my clothes. But then, if I had a bathroom, why it was easy.

I have been lucky. In the 21 years I had been married, I only lived in three houses that didn't have a bathtub. A lot of places he worked, they had a bath house. And a lot of times he would come home and take a bath in the bathtub.

Even though her husband's jobs as a skilled worker and as a foreman made Aunt Jenny's life easier than some women's, she is nonetheless a strong supporter of the United Mine Workers Union. She doesn't like airplanes and has refused television offers that would require her to fly to California, but she did board a plane once. She flew to Denver, Colorado, when the United Mine Workers Convention was held there in 1979.

But now I'll tell you, if you had lived through it before the union, you could tell the difference when there *was* a union.

Back then, if a man got killed in the mines, well, you drew state compensation, but it was a very little bit, and you drew five dollars for each child, and so then, after you got old, you didn't have anything at all. But now the union—you think what it means to the widow today, because there is the black lung and the pension that some of 'em draws. I don't draw that, but, you know, that means a lot when they are real old and can buy their own medicine and things like that. Some even have their miners' welfare card for their hospitalization. And did we have that before the union? Had nothin'.

As many things as the United Mine Workers have done for me, I feel indebted to them. My husband lived three months after the slate fall paralyzed him from the waist down in 1939. I went to the hospital every day—86 days.

He had so much company and flowers I could hardly get in the door. So the hospital put him in a ward because he had so much company. I said, "You're not staying in here!" He said, "Don't raise no trouble." I said, "You don't know trouble!"

I got hold of the UMWA hospital committee. I went to each one of them and told them that he was in that ward, and he wasn't able to be there. They said, "We'll put an end to that!" And, when I went back that night, he was in a private room. They went and made up money to pay my taxi bill. I wouldn't accept it because Jim had put in for everybody like that over the years. I had neighbors and such that took me and I didn't need the money.

He lived three months. I had a hard time after that. I wasn't old enough to draw social security, and there wasn't nothing like black lung, nor none of that, you see. All I got was state compensation. And, at that time, it paid \$30 for a widow, \$5 for each child. I had one child that drewed it, and, buddy, I would

live on that \$35 a month. I would raise a big garden right back here in this hill [Crooked Creek], can up stuff, and then when I could get far enough ahead I took in washin'.

He had carried \$750 insurance, and I took that insurance and bought this little house. Three rooms, and it was fallin' in everywhere, no gas, no water, no lights, but I gave \$300 for it.(15) The lot was worth that. I took the rest of the money and fixed it up 'til I could live in it. Boy, you could see daylight anywhere you looked. Three rooms and no bath. So what did I do? I took off and dug me out a spring over here at this rock cliff, where the water come out of the hill. I fixed it all up and put me some boards over that. Well, I had the best water you ever saw, right out here across the creek. I knowed I'd make it some way.

Then my boy, he went in the service, and he made me an allotment; it was \$47 a month. And, buddy, you can bet I sure lived high with my \$35 state compensation.

So here I just had the hardest time, but never missed a meal, I'll tell you that. And, many a time, there wasn't money in my house to have mailed a letter, but I still didn't worry. Somebody would bring in a washin' right when you got down to your last dollar. Seem like somethin' would turn up.

I was a good washer. Wash a heapin' basket full for two dollars. I don't know how much an hour that was. It would take you about all day to do a washin', and then, about half the night to do the ironing. Maybe children with little frilly dresses and things like that.

My oldest daughter was in high school when her daddy got killed. She quit school and went to work—doin' housework. My baby one—that was Roger's mother—she was ten. And we went on, and I got her through high school, but, buddy, it took work, let me tell you! I thought I would never on earth get old enough to get social security, but I finally got that. Had to wait 22 or 23 years.

But I'd always teach the kids, I'd say, "Listen children, you have had everything any other miner's children can have, but you can't have that now. But always hold your head high and just say 'I'm no better than nobody, but I'm as good as anybody.' That's the very way to be."

Aunt Jenny is very proud of having been able to work and make her way after her husband died. Again, she was luckier than many wives of miners who were killed before the widows' pension plan or any other social services were established. Aunt Jenny had her health and two nearly-grown children to help her, and she also had enough money to maintain her washing machine so she could earn some cash. She never wanted to take charity because she didn't need it. Yet she was always willing to be a good neighbor and lend a hand whenever anyone was in need. She tells this story of people helping each other during the Depression of the 1930s.

We helped each other. I'll give you a little example. There was a family of people down at Henlawson. Their boy died. It was during the Depression. They didn't have no money, and nobody else hardly did. Me and another woman got out there, and we made up collections. We went from house to house gettin' money, even came on the railroad yard right down here [Peach Creek] gettin' money to help bury that boy.

Her respect for the United Mine Workers, too, is based on the fact that working people stood together and helped one another in difficult times. But Aunt Jenny has no use for self-righteous do-gooders.

One Christmas, here come some people from a church round here at Peach Creek with a big bushel basket full of stuff. I don't know what all they had in there. I shouldn't have done it—I swear I have been hateful, though I've got more friends than any woman in the world. But here they come around, you know. "Mrs. Wilson," the preacher said, "We were helping the widows and orphans, and the church wanted to furnish you a Christmas dinner." I said, "I have a Christmas dinner." And so he went on explaining. I just thought, "Lord, have mercy! People thinks I'm on charity." I said, "Now listen, I appreciate that, but I don't want it. I've never had a dime's worth of charity, and I'll never have a dime's worth of charity." But he kept on talkin' this and that and the other. I thought, "Well, he just thinks I'm a pauper." I said, "Now I've told you once I didn't want it, and you take it to somebody else because I don't want it." So the man that was with him started trying to explain everything. I said, "People, I told you I didn't want the damn stuff. Load it up and get it away from here. Take it to somebody that needs it."

Buddy, they grabbed that basket and took off with it. Never nobody pulled that no more. They didn't make Jenny up a Christmas dinner, no sir!

Jenny started playing the banjo again in 1963 as a favor for the local grade school teacher.

There was a teacher from West Virginia University named Dr. Pat Gainer. He was teaching a course [for teachers] at Logan High School. The teachers all took it. He asked 'em to bring a guest. So this teacher up here asked me.

I told her I didn't even know if I could still tune a banjo. I got married and started raising a family and keeping house. No time for music. Roger's daddy had a music store, and he said he'd loan me one. Well, it come to me just as if I'd been playing yesterday.

So I went up to the class, and that teacher made the best grade. I told 'em some ghost stories and sang and the telephone never stopped ringing.

Dr. Gainer sent her to the Glenville State Folk Festival, where she met old-time fiddler Frank George. She performed at the Mountain State Arts and Crafts Fair in Ripley, where she first met Billy Edd

Wheeler in 1965. Wheeler, a songwriter and musician, became one of her supporters and promoters. He arranged to have an album made of her playing, singing, and telling stories.

Though her talents have made her a celebrity—she even has had a segment on television's "Real People"—nowhere is Aunt Jenny as treasured as she is in Logan County, where a lot of people say they enjoy listening to her talk as much as they enjoy her music.

I heard a tale one time. Said the fellow was away at college. He wrote home and told his parents he was going to get married. His daddy wrote and told him not to marry that girl. "She's your half-sister."

Well, that happened three times. Well, his mother got tired of listening to that. She finally wrote and said, "Don't you pay any attention. You go ahead and marry that girl. Your pap ain't your daddy anyhow."

Old-time banjo players study Aunt Jenny's style. She herself has had no formal musical training. "Lord, no," she says. "I don't know music. Not a word, not a lick. I wouldn't know music if I met it in the road." But she can play it, sticking to the old tunes and leaving the new country-and-western sound to her grandson Roger, with whom she often performs.

Aunt Jenny doesn't care for the new breed of country-and-western superstars because they seem self-indulgent to her. Neither does she approve of the high-pressure, high-profit Nashville music industry.

Back in my day, we had a different ball game all together. It was different people and different music. The old time music we played for love. These Nashville record companies, they don't care a thing about it. But they love to steal our songs.

Aunt Jenny's charm and her tough-minded sense of humor are a product of her history, of her life in the coal camps of Logan County. Her struggles to raise her family with dignity are a tribute to her own strength and the strength of thousands of other wives and widows of coal miners whose experiences make up half of the history of the working people in this state.

The experiences that Aunt Jenny describes reflect the strict division of labor between men and women in the camps. The men produced coal, and the women produced and raised children to be the next generation of coal miners.

The fact that Aunt Jenny had no time for her banjo is a reflection of the all-consuming work of women in the camps. A miner's wife during that period had no leisure time. Although she was not paid by the coal company, the work she did was absolutely essential to coal production. She fed the miner, washed his clothes, took care of him when he was sick, and sent her youngest sons into the mines to dig coal when her husband became unable to work or was killed.

Aunt Jenny Wilson *worked*, first for the coal companies and then for herself.

Our understanding of women's history and of Appalachian culture



needs a concrete examination of the economic context in which women lived. (16) Aunt Jenny's life provides a way to begin that examination.

## ENDNOTES

1. Quotations from Aunt Jenny are from interviews done by the author for this article. The conversations took place between February and May 1983 at Aunt Jenny's home on Crooked Creek in Logan County. Research was made possible in part by a grant from the Humanities Foundation of West Virginia.

2. The West Virginia Department of Mines, *Annual Reports, 1907-1921* (Charleston: State of West Virginia, n.d.).

3. Mountain State Arts and Crafts Fair, *Hearth and Fair*. Ripley, WV, 1973, p. 13.

4. Sagittarius Records, SR 1969.

5. Mountain State Arts and Crafts Fair, p. 14.

6. Interview with Roger Bryant, Logan, WV, 18 May 1983.

7. Michael Meador, "The Red Neck War of 1921: The Miners' March and the Battle of Blair Mountain," *Goldenseal* 7, April-June 1981, pp. 44-51.

8. See Howard B. Lee, *Bloodletting in Appalachia* (Parsons, WV: McClain Printing Company, 1969), and David Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880-1922* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981).

9. John Brophy, *A Miner's Life*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964, p. 6.

10. Mack H. Gillenwater, "Cultural and Historical Geography of Mining Settlements in the Pocahontas Coalfield of Southern West Virginia, 1880-1930," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Tennessee, 1972), p. 39.

11. For a black woman's view, see Randy Lawrence, "Make a Way Out of Nothing: One Black Woman's Trip from North Carolina to the McDowell County Coalfields," *Goldenseal* 5, October-December 1979, pp. 27-31.

12. For a description of the work involved in these jobs as well as changes that took place after the introduction of machinery into the mines, see Keith Dix, *Work Relations in the Coal Industry: The Hand-Loading Era, 1880-1930* (Morgantown: Institute for Labor Studies, West Virginia University, 1977).

13. For a description of coal field architecture, see Mack Gillenwater, "Cultural and Historical Geography," pp. 68-88.

14. Robert Spence, *The Land of the Guyandotte: A History of Logan County* (Detroit: Harlo Press, 1976), p. 347.



15. "When the income from renting houses fell below the cost of keeping the houses, it . . . became practical to sell the houses, which many companies did. They often kept the mineral rights beneath the property." Spence, *The Land of the Guyandotte*, p. 352.

16. For a history of the economic transformation of the mountains, see Ronald Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: The Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982). For an examination of the creation of the ideas of Appalachian culture, see Henry Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978).

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# Val Sayre Hammond

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1883-1956

by Estella R. Pomroy



*THE role of the legendary "school mistress" in the early 1900s is well illustrated by the life and career of Val Sayre Hammond. If "Miss Val," as she came to be known to three generations of Wirt Countians, were living today, she would be described as goal-oriented or a great humanitarian. Yet in her tiny five-foot two-inch frame, she embodied all the instincts of a commanding general or corporate executive.*

*Her story would not be complete without a description of her environment. Val Sayre Hammond is representative of many dedicated school teachers who spent their lives in a community, "ran" its educational system, and left indelible imprints upon it in countless ways. Her remarkable accomplishments after retiring from teaching stand as memorials to her affection and respect for the community and to its regard for her.*

Val Sayre Hammond was born in Elizabeth, West Virginia, on August 13, 1883, the third and youngest child of Samuel S. and Virginia Graham Sayre. Her mother was the town's milliner, and her father was a local businessman.(1) Val grew up in the bustling county seat of Wirt County during the most active period in its history. Business and political affairs resulted in heavy railroad and river traffic on the Little Kanawha. Because the road (which eventually became State Route 14) that connected Elizabeth to Parkersburg and the rest of the world was virtually impassable most of the time, a feeling of independence was created in the townspeople. Elizabeth was a self-contained community, and Val grew up in an environment in which the people solved problems themselves or sometimes with the help of friends and neighbors. Self-reliance was a highly esteemed virtue.

Wirt County, with 234 square miles, is the smallest county in West Virginia. With a population of 4,922, it also has the distinction of having the smallest number of people. It is one of the poorest counties, with 17 percent of its people below the state income average and 28 percent unemployed.(2) Demographics would seem to indicate that

Wirt County is an insignificant piece of real estate on the western edge of the Appalachian plateau, but the people who inhabit the county live in an area that is truly rich in history and tradition.(3)

The only incorporated town in Wirt County is Elizabeth, which serves as the county seat. Its location on the left bank of the Little Kanawha River has been described as one of the most beautiful occupied by any county seat in the state.(4) The town of Elizabeth was first settled in 1796. Soon other families joined the original settlers in creating a thriving village.(5) The community became the economic and population center for the many people who moved into the area, but they soon wearied of the long and difficult journey to Parkersburg or Ripley in order to obtain legal and governmental assistance. In 1847, the residents petitioned the General Assembly of Virginia for the formation of a new county. The request was granted, and Wirt County was formed from parts of Wood and Jackson counties on January 19, 1848. Elizabeth was designated as the county seat.(6)

Less than a generation before Val Sayre was born, Wirt County entered its most historically significant period. The great oil boom at Burning Springs began and Federal troops occupied the county during the Civil War. The oil boom drew thousands of people to the county, and fortunes were made and lost through oil and gas speculation. Some of the oilmen moved their families to Wirt County and stayed to enjoy the beauty and quiet life of a small town in West Virginia.(7)

Wirt County was deeply affected for many years by the admission, in 1863, of West Virginia as the 35th state in the Union and, in the same year, the firing on Burning Springs by Confederate troops. When the oil-soaked town burned, flames and smoke could be clearly seen in Elizabeth, eight miles away. Some people said that at night the glow from the flames could be seen in Parkersburg and that many feared that the end of the world was upon them.(8)

Although no major Civil War battles were fought in Wirt County, several engagements occurred, and the citizens became seriously divided by strong sympathies toward either the North or the South. During the post-Civil War period, Elizabeth was a microcosm of communities throughout the southern and border states.(9) Wirt County had war-time problems in abundance. Carpetbaggers, lawless gangs of desperadoes and looters, as well as Federal and Confederate troops, freely commandeered property for their own use or profit.(10)

Elizabeth was a patriotic town throughout Val Sayre's youth, with marching bands and parades on national holidays. Veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic stuck out their chests, pulled in their stomachs, and marched through the streets. The bands were under orders not to play any Confederate songs, under the conviction that if the band played them, war would erupt again.(11)

A fleet of riverboats served Wirt County and the town of Elizabeth. River traffic was heavy during the late 1800s and well into the 20th century. Val could look out her back door and see the dock just a few yards away. Passengers and freight were always being loaded or

unloaded, and this added more excitement to life in the small town. Often there would appear a "junk boat" carrying an assortment of items such as dishes, glassware, and jewelry to be sold or traded for junk. Val and the other children would gather old rubber boots and similar junk that they carried down to the dock and traded for precious items from the boat's cargo. Twice a year, showboats journeyed up the Little Kanawha River bringing singers, comedians, and magicians to entertain the rural townspeople.(12) While business, profits, politics, and community affairs consumed the interests of men, women were limited to the traditional role of homemaker.

The Sayre home in Elizabeth was a large Victorian dwelling located at the corner of Court and Mulberry streets. From this vantage point, young Val was an eye-witness to the most rapid growth the town and county was ever to experience. The population of Wirt County grew to over 10,000 by 1900. This was the period of oil and gas exploration. The Little Kanawha River had been made navigable for steamboats on a year-round basis with a series of locks and dams that had been completed for flood control. Industry and commerce flourished. Factories were built, and hotels and livery stables were required by the hundreds of travelers who came to Elizabeth on business.(13) From her home, Val could hear the twice-daily arrival of the train that traveled the Little Kanawha Railroad from Parkersburg through Wirt County to Owensport. The two round-trips a day never failed to bring excitement to the town.(14) From the Sayre home on Courthouse Square, young Val was able to observe everything that was going on, and the lessons she learned from her observations served her and her community well for nearly a century to come.

When Val started school, the state's public school system involved simple subscription schools. During her lifetime, Val was to participate in the development of these subscription schools into a free school system. When she entered school until about the time she was in the fifth grade, the term was four months long. About the middle of the 1890s, the school term was extended to a full six months.(15) Val studied from *McGuffey's Five Readers*, which covered all subjects from ABC's to algebra and geography.(16)

Although Val was able to attend the multi-roomed Elizabeth Elementary School, children in rural areas attended one-room schools known as common schools. Val's 33-year teaching career was spent almost entirely in the one-room schools of Wirt County. In these rural schools, one teacher taught the entire common school curriculum. Children sat on recitation benches at the front of the room, and classes were conducted within sight and hearing of all the other pupils. During the course of the day's work, the whole school watched and heard first-through eighth-graders learn their lessons. The bright student learned from the classes ahead of him or her, and the dull student benefitted from repetition.(17) One Wirt Countian has recorded that, outside of home, the greatest single influence on his life was the old one-room school he attended for eight years. He described the school house as

the very heart of the community. A wide variety of social and political events brought the entire neighborhood together at the school.(18)

Val Sayre Hammond became eligible to teach in the fall of 1900 at age 17 and was assigned to the Mud Hill School in Wirt County. Except for a few brief sabbaticals, she continued in the role of one-room school mistress until her retirement 43 years later. In those days, prospective teachers had to produce a certificate of attendance for at least five days at a Teacher's Institute. Teaching credentials were issued to those who attended and passed the required state achievement tests in such subjects as physical geography, physiology and hygiene, general history, arithmetic, and Latin. These institutes were held each summer in Elizabeth, and everyone who expected to teach was required to attend.(19)

High school education was not available in Wirt County until 1915. Val dropped out of teaching long enough to complete the two years of high school that then constituted the entire curriculum, and graduated with the class of 1924. So far as is known, that was her only graduation.(20)

Val's career spanned a period in which corruption in local West Virginia school systems had reached scandalous proportions. Teachers were expected to buy their assigned schools either with money or favors suggested by school board members or school administrators. Many teachers, during the earlier part of the 20th century, received permanent teaching certificates by paying local school administrators for the required recommendations. Access to desirable teacher assignments was dependent on such things as how teachers voted, which political party they favored, how much they would return in kickbacks, and what other favors they were prepared to offer. The suspiciously low number of rejections of applications for teaching certificates obtained through examinations suggests that partisan or personal considerations, rather than proper qualifications, governed the selection of teaching personnel. Salaries for white women teachers rarely exceeded \$30 per month.(21) School boards all over the country had realized that women would teach for lower salaries than men would accept, and the door was opened for the feminization of American education. No doubt, Val was unaware that as the education of the young became the responsibility of women, so did the decline of teachers salaries and benefits.(22)

Most of Val's teaching assignments were in rural schools. Road conditions and transportation were so bad that she usually lived in the school's community with a nearby family or in a county-supplied teacher's residence. These teacher residences had been created during the time when teachers were usually men, and some inducement was necessary to influence them to accept assignments in the rural areas of the country. This logic was not unique to Wirt County, but was a reflection of the thinking of the times. By living in these isolated communities, Val became intimately acquainted with virtually every family in the county. She was touched by the conditions of poverty,



ignorance, and hardship that she found in every home and community. Her natural talent for leadership was developed as she assumed a "take-charge" role with students and parents alike. Food, clothing, and shelter were basic problems for many of her charges and she never failed to supply these basic needs. She became more a social worker or missionary to the community than school teacher — much to the disapproval of the Wirt County Board of Education.(23)

Val was often in trouble with the Board of Education, but she was revered by pupils and their families in the communities she served. In 1931, the Board fired her, giving as its reason that she "was too much of a mother to the children" and that she neglected the task of teaching. This may have been true. Her love of children was extraordinary and resulted in a permissiveness that may have interfered with their academic progress. A review of her career reveals some interesting information. She was often assigned to schools that were not acceptable to anyone else. More often than not, her assignment was to the school that, for one reason or another, was the least desirable of all of the county's schools. These schools were usually inaccessible during the winter months and served a limited population of very poor people.(24)

When times were difficult during the Depression era, competition for certification and teaching positions became very intense. Assignments resulted from favoritism and dishonest preferential treatment. Val Sayre Hammond's very nature would have excluded her from this system of conducting the affairs of public education. It was not until the teacher shortage during World War II that these corrupt practices ceased. Her unwillingness to participate in these manipulative games, no doubt, contributed to the fact that, during the 33 years of her teaching, she served 20 different schools. She maintained valid teaching credentials through extension classes offered in the community by Glenville State College, but she never accumulated enough credits to complete a degree. Her preoccupation with the human conditions surrounding her was always preeminent in her life. A college degree or permanent teacher certification was secondary, at best, to Val Sayre Hammond.

On August 5, 1943, Val was saluted nationally from Hollywood, California, by radio as the "Good Neighbor of the Day" on the *Breakfast at Sardi's* program, hosted by Tom Breneman. The letter that nominated her was written by a former student, and perhaps best sums up Val Sayre Hammond's role as teacher-missionary-social worker-surrogate mother.(25)

Students have provided much insight into Val's teaching career. One student had noticed that whenever poor pupils had inadequate shoes and gloves, their teacher would see that they had new ones the very next day. She went on to say that everyone knew Miss Val's paycheck was always spent before she ever got it.(26) Another former student said that Val was always there for her students even long after they finished school. Miss Val had been the first visitor after one former pupil's baby had died. This same student told of Val's bringing



medicine to doctor the colds, earaches, and sore eyes of her students.(27) One of her male students said that Val would even bail former students out of jail — and never made them feel guilty. Another described her as a true gentlewoman, dedicated to her fellow Wirt Countians.(28)

On June 21, 1910, Val Sayre was married to Curtis W. Hammond at her home in Elizabeth. A year later, her only child, a son, was still-born. Her grief was transformed into a loving and caring attitude toward all children. Hammond's occupation as telegraph operator on the railroad required him to be away from home a great deal of time, and Val resumed her teaching career in the fall of 1911.

Two years later, Val and Curtis took a little girl to rear as their own. Five-year-old Bessie Henderson became the focal point of Val's attention, and Val spent the next six years as a mother and full-time homemaker. Bessie, now Mrs. Eskey McCauley of Petroleum, West Virginia, recalls her foster parents with the deepest respect and affection. Val's characteristic benevolence, tolerance, and concern were passed on to Bessie. She followed Val into the teaching profession and continues to serve the less fortunate people of her community in many charitable ways.

Val's last year of teaching was the 1942-43 term, which she spent at the Freeport School in Wirt County.(29) She was 60 years old when she retired on the minimal pension granted school teachers at that time. Her health had failed, and cancer had been diagnosed. Surgery was successful in removing the cancer, but she required a colostomy, which created other problems for her. Yet with her handicaps of age, poverty, and health, her greatest achievements were still ahead of her.

Val was no different from any other strong, goal-oriented leader when she found herself retired after an extremely satisfying career. She instinctively began working toward new goals. Perhaps her near brush with death and the constant reminder of own own mortality, which the colostomy provided, caused her to focus attention on the condition of the town's cemetery.

The Knights of Pythias Cemetery, near the southern limit of Elizabeth, was established by the fraternal organization in the mid-1800s. That group had served as steward of the grounds for many years, but the active membership had dwindled to a very few, and each family became responsible for its own plots. As the population of Elizabeth declined after the Great Depression years, many families no longer had descendants living in the area. With no one to care for the family plots, most of the cemetery had become overgrown with weeds and briars, which threatened monuments, and, indeed, had destroyed some of them.

In 1946, the town's cemetery was a disgrace, and Val Sayre Hammond found a new objective for her energies and abilities. Like any good administrator, she had a gift for organizing people to accomplish goals. Val did her homework. She learned what other communities had done to remedy similar situations, and she developed

her course of action. A public meeting was held at the Pomroy Funeral Home; about a dozen people attended. Most of those present were Val's former students who did not dare to refuse. Val presided and explained the problem to the group. The solution she had decided on was the creation of an endowment fund that would assure perpetual care of the cemetery and would provide other services, such as grave digging and monument repair work. The discussion resulted in an agreement that \$50,000 would be needed. A committee to organize the fund-raising activity was appointed. The committee met regularly during those first difficult years and eventually achieved its goal.

Val's concern for people, especially the poor, resulted in some of the difficulties that had to be surmounted. She insisted that all monies had to come from contributions. She would not allow fees or assessments to be levied against families or individuals. Nor could anyone be billed for services. The cost of ground in the cemetery could not be increased. Donations were solicited through the *Wirt County Journal* and hundreds of letters, handwritten by Val, to former students and residents.(30) Today, visitors to the Knights of Pythias Cemetery in Elizabeth see a well-kept, well-preserved facility. The Cemetery Committee functioned as a group from the very beginning and continues so to the present, but Val Sayre Hammond was the catalyst. All West Virginians with roots in Wirt County are grateful for Val's interest in preserving family history and heritage.

After Val's death in 1956, Louise Roberts, treasurer of the Cemetery Committee, published an article in the May 25, 1956, edition of the *Wirt County Journal*. That article best sums up the gratitude of the community for one of Val Sayre Hammond's greatest achievements. Miss Roberts paid tribute to Val's rare character, her faith in people, and her freedom from pettiness. Val Sayre Hammond's untiring effort to accomplish what she set out to do was exemplified by her determination to get a few more letters written to raise money for the cemetery during her last illness.(31)

One major project was not enough to fill Val Sayre Hammond's long days in retirement. Her profound interest in the lives of her fellow Wirt Countians extended to their ancestors as well. As she provided for the perpetual care of the dead, she planned for the memorializing of their lives. By the time she had established the Cemetery Committee and set it on the road to successful completion of its mission, she had formulated her last great community project, a museum for Wirt County.

Just a few feet from Val Hammond's back door was an old two-story house constructed of red, hand-made bricks. Located at the end of Court Street and facing the Little Kanawha River, it had been built in the 1830s by Alfred Beauchamp to house his family and business enterprises and to serve as an inn for travelers. Over time, the building had housed a store, post office, dental office, and several small apartments. Despite destructive attempts at remodeling, the building had survived, and, in 1948, it began to interest Val. She decided that

the town needed a museum and the old brick building would house that facility.(32)

Val's natural instincts for organization and management served her well. She recognized the need for a sponsoring group that would be self-perpetuating and would assume responsibility for the support and maintenance of the museum. To that end, she organized the Elizabeth Beauchamp Chapter of the Daughters of American Pioneers in 1949. She provided the determination and enthusiasm that motivated those women through the following five years. The \$7,500 price tag on the property was awesome in 1949, but the project was undertaken, and raising the money became the focal point of Val Hammond's energies. She located an affluent descendent of the original owners of the house, Alfred Beauchamp Newman, and enlisted his aid. She wrote to every former student she had ever taught, and asked for, at least, one dollar. She organized bake sales and rummage sales, sold garden vegetables, and exhausted her own meager resources. On January 2, 1954, the property was free of debt. Newman continued to assist the group as the restoration of the building and its conversion into a museum continued. He endowed the museum in his will and thus secured the future of this community project.(33)

The Beauchamp-Newman Museum was formally opened on June 18, 1955, with appropriate celebration. It was one of the happiest and most satisfying days of Val's life. Hundreds of citizens turned out to join in the festivities. A parade was organized with many people wearing costumes of the mid-1800s. The high school band and many floats lent a festive air to this joyous occasion. The *Wirt County Journal* article on June 17, 1955, paid tribute to this "lovable and modest lady" for the part she had played in bringing a museum to Wirt County.

Val Sayre Hammond died on April 22, 1956. She is still revered by the people of a grateful community, and the beautifully tended cemetery and fine museum remind them of the woman who made a difference in the lives of everyone she touched and in the lives of generations to come.

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26. Ibid.
27. Interview with Judy Nutter Roberts, Elizabeth, WV, 18 March 1985.
28. Interview with Woodrow Wilson, Elizabeth, WV, 10 March 1985.
29. Wirt County, West Virginia, Board of Education, Archives and Records, Elizabeth, WV: 1900-1943.
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# Mary Elizabeth Behner Christopher

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1906-

by Bettijane Burger



MARY Behner encouraged the 1933 Class of University High School (Morgantown, WV) with these words: "Most people in the world are content to live in the 'land of things as they seem' . . . [but] some have the vision of a 'land of things as they ought to be.' "

She saw the coal-mining communities of nearby Scott's Run for what they ought to be. Behner's example illustrates the powerful force of a single strong leader upon a community. Mary Behner touched thousands of lives during her tenure among the people who lived and worked in the coalfields.

Like most women who pursued work options prior to the Second World War, Mary Behner was involved in a career in human services. Hers was an effort to bring about change in coalfield communities where low-income workers were dependent on "the company," not on themselves. Though small of stature, Mary Behner was strong of will. She was not afraid to wash out lice, sleep with bedbugs, scrub floors, dress the dead, or demand books and buses.

By studying the contributions that women like Mary Behner Christopher have made to isolated areas in West Virginia, we can better understand the history of women in general.

Scott's Run stretched for nine miles and included the coal camps of Osage, Pursglove, Bertha Hill, Jere, Stumptown, Connellsville Hill, Liberty, and Cassville. During World War I, the coal companies had employed Eastern European immigrants and, later, blacks and strike-breakers from the South. Many families were large, and most housing was on stilts and in shanties with no indoor plumbing. The Pursglove community had only segregated schools, a company store, a post office, and a beer garden. Twenty-eight nationalities were represented among the 10,000 residents. The luckiest were farmers or those who had enough land for gardens. The least fortunate were members of families in which the father had been laid off or injured in the mines.

From 1928 to 1937, this community was home for Mary Behner, whose life has been devoted to service. These nine years, however, deserve special attention because they show how one determined individual can restore hope and pride to a community.

Mary's early years were valuable preparation for the challenges she was to meet in Scott's Run. Born in Xenia, Ohio, Mary moved often during her childhood. Her father was a Presbyterian minister who served churches in several different states. In 1924, Reverend Behner accepted the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church of Clarksburg, West Virginia. In that same year, Mary enrolled in Wooster College, hoping to earn a degree in history. From her father, Mary inherited an interest in international lifestyles. From her mother, born Flora Etta Dreisbach, she inherited a deep interest in missions. Prophetically, Mary's Wooster College yearbook said "[her] laugh is the outward expression of a heart whose joy is not in the trivialities of life, but . . . in the knowledge that some piece of work has been well done."<sup>(1)</sup>

Working in the Student Volunteer Movement while in college, Mary thought that she would like to go abroad to help the Movement in its goal of promotion of overseas missions. However, Dr. William E. Brooks and the congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Morgantown, five miles from Scott's Run, were becoming concerned about local conditions. Mary's father, then chair of the West Virginia Synod National Missions Committee, suggested to Reverend William Munson, state synodical executive, that Mary might be interested in working in the first mission of the church in the state's coalfields instead of in the overseas missions.

With courage and idealism, Mary accepted the Synod's offer of a \$100 monthly salary and arrived in Morgantown in November 1928. She took up residence at the Women's Christian Temperance Union Community House.

Mary had been warned that Scott's Run—the mission site—could be a dangerous place to work, but she rejected the suggestion that she wear deaconess' garb. She thought that the safest way to start would be to work with the children. On her first day in the community, after getting off the bus and then walking a mile up a slag-covered road past hundreds of houses on the hill, Mary went to the two, one-room schoolhouses at Stumptown, where she was welcomed by the teachers. She told the classes a story, introduced them to outdoor supervised recreation, and announced that there would be a Sunday School starting in a month. With nothing to do except play in coal cars and without money for entertainment, the children were delighted.

Mary began her diary on November 17, 1928, with a prayer and a record of her first successes. Seventy-six children attended the first Sunday School. Mary divided the group by age into classes staffed by West Virginia University student volunteers. Half the children had never been to Sunday School, and they asked for a "Saturday School" to continue their positive experiences.

Because Mary believed in the need to develop responsibility among the children, she appointed special room scouts who would start the fire and sweep the floors before she arrived at the new little community center each morning. Ball captains had special duties during recreation. The games equipment she had brought with her was new and fun, the children responded with enthusiasm, and the teachers were receptive to her ideas. Hearing of her good work, groups in Morgantown invited her to visit, address, or join their associations. Thus, when she found out that the children had no books to read, she started a book drive among her Morgantown contacts. This drive soon brought 500 texts to the community. The children paid five cents to become library members, and the book corner became a popular place in the small, abandoned Stumptown schoolhouse that had been given to her.

Soon, people began to ask for Mary's help when there was sickness in the family or when there was no food to eat. She often arranged social services for them and sometimes gave them her own money or lunch. The children took her to their houses where she was shocked to see newspaper-covered walls, chickens running freely inside, beds without sheets, children without shoes, and babies in rags. She felt that it was important to take University students, visiting officials, and Morgantown residents to see these conditions. Working with others, she arranged for gifts and food to be sent from the Morgantown Presbyterian Church for the first community Christmas program, which was attended by 168 persons. Instead of Santa Claus, Mary said that the Christmas Spirit would give out the presents. On other occasions, realizing that most of the children had never been to Morgantown, Mary arranged visits undertaken in a free bus.

Continuing to broaden the horizons of the children, Mary started a Charm School for 24 girls in early 1929. Dishes were donated by Royal Furniture, and notebooks were given to each girl. Weekly sessions, over a three-month period, dealt with diet, posture, exercise, hygiene, sleep, etiquette, speech, intellect, sex, sociability, and famous women. Some of the lessons on hygiene and sanitation were very basic. The girls also enjoyed learning how to entertain. In a more practical vein, they made articles for their homes and tried new recipes. The training ended with a party that featured the presentation of awards. Ruth Voithofer, literary editor of the Charm School newspaper, wondered in one of the issues:

Miss Behner—the mother of us all,  
The one we all look up to,  
She made our Charm School possible,  
Without her, what would we do.

But school was not always easy. A difficult time came when Mary asked her charges to speak in their parents' native language. They became quiet, and she felt they were ashamed. She told them that their heritage was something to be proud of and that students went to college to learn the very languages they already knew. Later, there were

many ethnic programs presented at Scott's Run and in Morgantown, and the idea of the Charm School program spread elsewhere.(2)

Expansion continued as a Boy Scout troop was established. While some of Mary's church superiors were not impressed by the secular activities, religion was not forgotten. The Sunday School was only one segment of the work at Scott's Run. Other religious activities flourished. The first Easter program, in 1929, attracted a crowd of 200, some watching the program through the windows. Children said their parents were not praying as part of home life. In June 1929, when Mary held the first two-week Vacation Bible School, only one child knew the name of the first book of the Bible. Eighteen volunteer teachers taught lessons that were attitude, rather than content, oriented. Biblical characters were used to illustrate the attributes of reverence, teamwork, and honesty.

In town, however, Mary found herself growing impatient with some organizations' meeting topics. After a Morgantown club's program on American history, she wrote, "If [only] they'd help to make history by losing themselves in some souls . . ."(3) She continued her efforts to encourage organizations to respond to the needs of Scott's Run through donations, visits, and entertainment.

In the summer of 1929, Mary interrupted her mission work to study at the Chautauqua Summer Institute in New York on a scholarship from the Guild of Seven Seals, whose members gave her a car and financial support.

Rejuvenated by her studies, Mary returned to Scott's Run. During the next summer, the children in Bible School took an imaginary trip around the world, and each child took home a "passport." The photographs attached to these passports were, for many, the first photographs taken of them. Another first was achieved when several boys went to Scout Camp. In addition, a family of nine was adopted for a day by Phi Chi Delta, a Presbyterian sorority under the leadership of Mrs. J. Leslie French, wife of the campus pastor. While the family was entertained in Morgantown, University students cleaned and refurbished their house. The family was surprised and grateful, and their house became a neighborhood attraction.

By 1931, the Depression had severely affected Scott's Run. Unemployment and strikes meant no food. Occasionally, Monongalia County would pay \$6 a month to some families. Churches pitched in to help meet people's needs, and the Quakers sent literally tons of clothing and food. Mary was the logical person to coordinate the relief programs. When Red Cross flour began to arrive, Mary felt that everyone should share it because the employed miners, who were poorly paid, were often as desperate as the unemployed.

During this time, Mary became angry when the coal company refused to participate in a seed distribution program. The miners received only \$11 for two weeks of nine-and-a-half hours of work per day. Their fixed expenses, including rent and insurance, came to \$8, leaving \$3 for food. They were paid in scrip, which could be used only

at the company store. Malnutrition intensified, and Mary thought that the seed distribution program could have encouraged family gardens. In her diary, Mary wrote, "These companies have no regard for human life. They tear men to pieces, then let them go to die. It's a crime that there isn't government support [sic] over the actions of private companies."(4)

Mary's work was noticed in Washington, D.C. Mrs. Herbert Hoover sent relief supplies to Scott's Run. In answer to a letter from Mary, Mrs. Hoover's secretary wrote, "Such efforts as yours . . . are indeed the salvation of any community fortunate enough to have such interest."(5)

On the darker side, she helped bury children, and, through her home visits, became aware of the problems of battered women and marital rape. Faced with these harsh realities, Mary was angered when she discovered that an annual missionary society program was all "study" and no field work. She arranged to have the conferees visit a real missionary project—hers.

Even though Mary's formal activities were not racially integrated, some black school teachers thought she was breaking down barriers when she invited them to dinner. Her black girls' chorus sang for all-white community organizations in Morgantown. Mary started the first black Girl Scout troop in Monongalia County, but these scouts were not allowed to join the official organization. Velma Dale Jackson, a black woman who still lives in Scott's Run, said that Mary was an "inspiration to every child, black and white."(6)

Mary's work was now drawing people from several communities. With all the programs crowding the schoolhouse, she had her eye on an empty company store building—formerly a stable for mine horses—on the main road at the beginning of No. 2 Hollow. After six months of negotiations, Mary received the three-room building from the Pursglove Coal Company. In the spring of 1931, she refurbished the building that she called The Shack. She used old mine powder boxes for seats, built a stage, and converted the walk-in refrigerator to a shower, which was available for a penny. The store shelves in the side room became the library, and the metal cookie rack held magazines. The first event at The Shack was a Quaker-sponsored movie. The children sat on the floor, which had been covered with straw to protect them from the cold.

Other activities set up by Mary included a second Sunday School, health clinics, nutrition classes, mothers' club, canning kitchens, integrated lunches, and the first integrated nursery school program in the county. The nursery school program was under the direction of Dr. Elizabeth Stalnaker of the WVU Psychology Department. The beds in the The Shack were straw-filled gunny sacks, and hazards included coal dust and noise from the railroad tracks a few feet away. Occasional flooding through the floor from a nearby creek was also a problem. Nevertheless, The Shack was a good place for the community.

Her attempts to involve University students resulted in richer lives

for all. For example, the Beautiful Homes Club was the creation of Anna Santore. The members made curtains and knick-knacks for their rooms, and made their families aware of aesthetics and the possibility of change. Members of the Club attended a homemaking exposition in Pittsburgh. After a birthday party for Ruth Voithofer, Mary got the idea for a "UHYSCHOOL Club," a word she coined from the name University High School. Meeting monthly for supper, movies, football games, and other outings, the group learned social skills while having fun. Members attained high status in the community and encouraged other young people to enroll in high school. On one of their hikes, they came upon a plateau in the Cheat Mountains, which was later developed into Chestnut Ridge Camp by Reverend A. Lee Klaer. The camp would provide an opportunity for miners' children to enjoy healthier surroundings.

After speaking at a meeting of the Lions Club in early 1933, Mary invited members to The Shack to eat lunch at the regular noon "feed." The lunches, sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee, fed 200 children whose growth was monitored with weight charts. Before the lunch program, some of the children had never seen napkins. Cooks had been recruited from the community, with George Ley as head chef. The *Morgantown Post* recorded what visitors found: the place was spotlessly clean, and the children quietly in their places.(7) They noted that each child received a teaspoon of cod liver oil and had a toothbrush and a bar of soap. In her diary, Mary wrote, "One of the cooks told me . . . that he heard one man say to another that the job out there was too big for a single person," and that the other man had responded that Mary was capable of it.(8)

A Lions Club newsletter recorded the members' impressions:

Our hearts were touched. Many of those . . . do not eat from one noon to the next. There was no urging . . . to eat this or that which we often hear at home; no . . . food left on the plate to be thrown into the garbage can . . . . Our regular fifty-cent luncheon fee was collected and turned over to Miss Behner.(9)

With various relief programs meeting immediate needs, Mary began to see a new dependency developing in Scott's Run. Since she felt that families should continue to have responsibilities, she made certain that they helped prepare the noon meals and learned better hygiene.

Other problems were made worse by the Depression. Many of the women and their families were desperate. One battered wife, who had married at 13 and had never learned to read, said she would rather die than have another child. She tried to abort her pregnancy by taking quinine, kerosene, and iodine, and finally succeeded with a crochet hook. One family hid their flour in a trunk that contained mothballs because they feared that they would get no more. They later ate bread leavened with mothballs.

The bright spot amid these troubles was The Shack, which added music lessons, a harmonica club, choirs that sang on the radio, a



cobbler's shop, and the Scott's Run Players, who performed regionally. In June 1933, the Players and various musical groups gave a performance at a Morgantown church in appreciation of the community's aid. The church was filled. Even though their husbands were on strike, the Scott's Run women provided cookies and tea at a party for the Missionary Society. Mary wrote, "Only through friendship and actual . . . contact are we going to bridge the gulf between classes. . . . The dole system and so-called 'charity' is [sic] an outworn method . . . but some people see the easy way and it takes time to educate the 'givers.'"(10)

Educational assistance continued to be offered. An injured miner volunteered to be librarian. Sponsored by the Christian Endeavor, a high school group, the reading room provided a quiet place for study. Each club paid for magazine subscriptions in line with its interests. Encyclopedias were donated, and the Christian Endeavor read *Magnificent Obsession* by Lloyd Douglas together, even though they needed dictionaries to do so. Ruth Voithofer was among the first five from Scott's Run to graduate from high school, and the Christian Endeavor gave her a "college shower" when she became the first to go to college—and on a scholarship.(11)

In November 1933, The Shack held a celebration honoring the fifth anniversary of Mary Behner's community work. More than 500 people attended. During the first five years, there had been an aggregate attendance of 100,000 people at activities. The Shack was booked from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., with eight part-time workers financed by the County Welfare Agency. Mary had made 2,168 house calls, and expenses for the program averaged only \$500 per year.

Because so many groups were involved at The Shack, Mary saw a need for a community council to foster better cooperation and planning. Thirty-two groups, representing five communities, joined together, installed an outdoor bulletin board, and started their first project: to find a playground. They found land and leased it from the coal company. The slope with a flat base was always breezy and cool, so the playground was named "Breezy Heights," with WVU student James Shepherd as its supervisor. Picnic tables, a flagpole, stone steps, and playground equipment were quickly added. Mary wrote, "Isn't it strange how far one can soar into the air . . . with a broken wing? Never before have I felt the tugging against the ideals I have visioned for this work, and yet in the midst of the most difficult period in all the six years . . . has come the most significant thing."(12)

Meanwhile, Mary served on the National Council of the Student Volunteer Movement as its western Pennsylvania and West Virginia president. She found time for the American Association of University Women, League of Women Voters, and Quota Club. To each she brought the message of her work.

In a lecture to an educators' conference, Mary listed guidelines for success: "Share, [do] not hand out. Attitude is more important than a plan. Use resources from the community. Teach them to appreciate



what they have.”(13) At other conferences, The Shack was discussed as a model for social services and community work.

But harsh reality intruded again. Three persons died in a mine accident in March 1935; The Shack became a place of vigil.

The contrast in life experience between Scott’s Run and Morgantown was sometimes hard to overcome. After a speech at a Morgantown club, Mary was approached by a woman who asked her why it was so hard to get maids from Scott’s Run. The woman felt that not all should be encouraged to follow “higher lines”—some should be encouraged to be good maids. Mary wrote, “What little understanding there is. . . I’m not out there to train maids.”(14)

Mary felt that a man should be hired to work with the boys, but she was surprised when Reverend Lee Klaer was hired in 1935 as the new campus pastor, with coordinating duties for a new Student Service Project at Scott’s Run. Even though Mary had been there for seven years, she was puzzled at his title of director, with a monthly salary three times hers and a free house. She had not been consulted about the project and was amused at how ministers would take credit for her ideas. She wrote, “But then, men must think they’re ‘doing it’—you know.”(15) She ruefully remembered hearing once that a good teacher is one who works oneself out of a job.

But there was no time for distractions. The mine company owner was opposed to the relief work at The Shack and threatened to close it. She wrote, “I’m not afraid of him, and I would picket the place before I’d let anything like that happen.”(16) The owner conceded that he liked her work with children, and his threat to close The Shack was never carried out.

Scott’s Run continued to attract national attention. Carolyn Rich, a WVU student volunteer, sold an article on The Shack to the *Christian Science Monitor*.(17) However, some Morgantown people were trying to ignore Scott’s Run. At an organizing meeting for a series of forums, the Pursglove Community Council attended. Yet when the planning committee chose sites, Pursglove was excluded until Mary presented a petition to the Council. They revised the meeting places, and Pursglove had the best attendance, being the only group that was both racially integrated and had attracted the participation of miners.

In a 1937 issue of *Social Progress*, a Presbyterian magazine, Mary wrote about how students who volunteered in Scott’s Run were “working both ways.” They were sharing knowledge and seeing problems that were described in their textbooks. In the article, Mary included part of a letter from a college student: “Certainly the experience has been helpful to us as students, as citizens, and as prospective ministers. Funny, isn’t it . . . Scott’s Run needs what we have in excess here—education and Christian morality. We need what Scott’s Run knows as well—suffering.”(18)

Although in the public eye, Mary did not abandon her “Scott’s Run jewels,” as she called them. She continued to watch over her charges. For example, even though Ruth Voithofer did well at

University High School, she struggled at Wooster. One of 11 children whose mother had died, Ruth was unable to pay her college fees when her father was laid off. Mary pleaded for an extension on the deadline for money: "Not only does Ruth need Wooster, but Wooster needs Ruth." (19) Ruth wrote to her, "Thank you so much for renewing my courage and faith in my most difficult adventure. . . . These . . . difficulties are making me stronger in my faith. I don't see where I would be, if it weren't for you." (20) After college, Ruth worked in Scott's Run and then entered Commonwealth Labor College in Mena, Arkansas. Her career has been devoted to organizing the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers. As the following attests, her choice of career was established by her Scott's Run experience. From California in 1978, Ruth Voithofer Newell wrote a letter for The Shack's 50th anniversary celebration. She remembered going on a hunger march with her father:

Those first years of The Shack were pivotal in my life . . . We found ourselves *united as one family* . . . With perception and sensitivity, Mary . . . recognized the needs of the miners. . . . It was a program that brought a semblance of peace and unity. . . . It was Mary's . . . programs that announced: '*Man's inhumanity to man*' stops at the front door of The Shack.' (21)

Other students of Mary Behner have become successful. One Scott's Run youngster landed in the White House. When Sanford Luther Fox left for Washington, D.C., after high school, he joined the Air Corps and took a correspondence course in commercial art. He was a crew member on the plane that took President Roosevelt to the Yalta Conference. Asked by the President to deliver a message, Fox visited the White House social entertainments office and later joined it as an engraver of invitations. He became its chief in 1958, a position he held until his retirement in 1975. Fox called The Shack "a great oasis," where he learned values, received guidance, and developed self-expression. (22)

Another student, Walter Sura, an avid reader at The Shack, was president of Christian Endeavor. He attended school until the eighth grade, worked in the mines, and then joined the Army. After leaving the Army, he took a test to qualify for a high school diploma and did so well that he was able to enter the University of California at Los Angeles without taking an entrance exam. He felt that his success was directly related to the library at The Shack. He is now retired from the Postal Service. His mischievous memories include putting Mary's car on the porch and throwing firecrackers through the windows at a square dance, causing the dancers to create new steps. In a 1983 letter, he wrote, "She bridged the gap between the grimness of a coal camp . . . and our still unrealized potential." (23)

George Fumich, another Scott's Run boy, was student body president, while earning a law degree at West Virginia University. He was legal counsel for Christopher Coal Company, then spent many years in Washington, D.C., rising to the post of assistant secretary for

the Department of Energy for fossil energy. He is now retired as Dean of the College of Mineral and Energy Resources at WVU. He remembers that Mary invited a group of teenagers out to lunch:

To us this was something out of the ordinary. She didn't tell us, but we all knew that it was to get experience in eating in public . . . in those days, eating in public wasn't the familiar thing to do. We were all shy and very much afraid, but we all . . . really enjoyed the event. It was something that I have never forgotten.(24)

A popular Scott's Run story was published in *Women and Missions* and *Forward*, both Presbyterian magazines. A gang, calling themselves "The Dirty Dozen," had tried to disrupt meetings by throwing stones at the walls of The Shack. One night, Mary came out before they could slip away.

"Come on in. Have your meeting in The Shack—there's some new games you might like to try," said Mary, hiding her fear. They ran in, inspecting. She said, "Let's call the meeting to order. How about electing some officers?" Albert Claudio was elected president, and soon the members had a secret handshake and a password. Now they were wondering what to do.

"Well," said Mary. "You ought to do something to justify your name. The dirtiest thing around here is the outside of The Shack. Why couldn't we scrub down the walls? You can get free showers and have a big feed afterward." They did.

They helped clear brush for the new playground and finally joined the Community Council as the "Friendly Fellows." One of the members was Walter Sura.(25)

Glenna Williams, who once stood in line at The Shack for flour, participated in only a few Shack activities, but later realized that Mary was her role model. Glenna became the first director of Rock Forge Neighborhood House—another Presbyterian home mission—near Morgantown. She served as director from 1950 to 1981. Glenna was glad to be a member of one of the first families selected to relocate to Arthurdale, a model community, where she is now retired. She joined Mary 30 years ago as charter members of Soroptimist International, a professional women's service club. For the 25th anniversary of The Shack, Glenna wrote:

Into this jungle of hatred, suspicion and want

She walked unafraid with a dream in her heart.(26)

Still serving the community is the Shack-related Miners' Memorial Swimming Pool, which was first integrated pool in the county. A gymnasium has been added to this facility. Also, The Shack was the cornerstone of the Mountaineer Mining Mission of six community centers, started in 1946. Today, The Shack is part of the Presbyterian Parish and Neighborhood Service, but it is still known as The Shack. The name has endured for over 50 years. The present Shack is down the road from the site of the first Shack, now an overgrown, grassy spot with faint traces of railroad tracks.

Scott's Run has lost the thousands of people who lived there when the mines were busy, but The Shack has survived change of location, many ministers, and church reorganization. Its founder feels that it has endured because of its original concept of laying down a firm foundation that could adapt to changing needs and its clear message of Christian service and community loyalty.

Scott's Run today is still sliced by a two-lane road, but the hills that once had rows of company houses are, for the most part, silent and tree-covered. The green grass has finally covered the dirt, but one coal mine remains near the rubble of the burned-out beer garden. Interstate 79 now passes near the new Shack. Cars whiz by, their occupants unaware of the former teeming, multi-ethnic communities.

Mary ended her work at Scott's Run when she married David Christopher in 1937, but she did not retire from community service. She was president of the Fairmont District Women's Society of Christian Service of the Methodist Church (her husband's faith) and was dubbed "Saddlebag Mary" because of her visits bringing program material to all the churches. She was the first female delegate from the Wesley United Methodist Church to the annual conference and a charter member of WVU's board of directors for the Council of International Programs.(27)

While president of Church Women United of Monogalia County, she was selected as one of 48 American women to go to Southeast Asia on a Peace Causeway in 1974. Talking to the Vietnamese during the war and visiting the Hiroshima Memorial made her a political activist. She joined the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and lobbied on issues in Washington. She was chair of the committee that founded Odyssey House (Morgantown) for abused and neglected children, she participated in a jail ministry, and she was involved in the Coalition for Justice, which created the Youth Services Center on whose board she continues to serve. In 1985, she received the Monongalia County Bicentennial Zackquill Morgan award for social service. She has been called "the heartbeat of Morgantown."

Looking back over a lifetime of service, Mary reflected on her philosophy of community involvement: "Something can always be made bigger than it is; any organization can change. We should never just accept the tradition of what is already there. Every person and group has skills that can be used in more meaningful ways."(28) These meaningful ways, according to Mary Behner Christopher, include seeking international understanding and providing services for *all* community members.

## ENDNOTES

1. *INDEX: Yearbook of Wooster College, Ohio*. (Milwaukee: Hammersmith Kertmeyer Company, 1928), p. 55.
2. For instance, Mary's friend, missionary and author Induk Pakk, took the Charm school idea to the school she founded in Korea.
3. Mary E. Behner, unpublished diaries, Charleston, WV, p. 216.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
5. Letter from P. H. Bueter to Mary Behner (part of Behner diaries, p. 77).
6. Interview with Velma Dale Jackson, 1983.
7. "Lions Visit 'Shack,' Friends' Food Center," *Morgantown Post*, 1 February 1933, p. 1.
8. Behner diaries, p. 315.
9. *Lions Club Newsletter*, 15-16 June 1933.
10. Behner diaries, p. 772.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 495.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 790.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 919.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 971.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 1141.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 1247.
17. Carolyn Rich, "Coal Isn't Everything," *Christian Science Monitor*, 30 January 1936, p. 14.
18. Mary Elizabeth Behner, "It Works Both Ways," *Social Progress*, June 1937, p. 35.
19. Behner diaries, p. 788.
20. Letter from Ruth Voithofer to Mary Behner, 5 November 1933 (attached to Behner diaries, p. 551).
21. Letter from Ruth Voithofer Newell, 14 August 1978.
22. Interview with Sanford Luther Fox, 18 July 1983.
23. Letter from Walter Sura, 24 July 1983.
24. Letter from George Fumich, 3 August 1983.
25. Mary Elizabeth Behner, "The Dirty Dozen," *Women and Missions*, March 1936, p. 388, and Elizabeth Allen Cavanna, "The Shack," *Forward*, 4 September 1937, p. 12.

26. Glenna Williams, "Mountains and Men," choral reading written for the 25th Anniversary of The Shack, 1953, p. 5.

27. Other community leadership positions held include: NAACP, International Christian University of Japan Women's Planning Committee; president, Wesleyan Service Guild; president, Soroptimist International; 1978 Soroptimist Outstanding Leadership Award; president, Church Women United; jail ministry; board of directors, Youth Services Center; founder, Mountaineer Doll Club; charter member, Literacy Volunteers; developer of United Methodist pilot program on children's peace education; planning committees, West Virginia University Women's Studies programs and peace forums; charter board member, Victims Assistance.

28. Interview with Mary Behner Christopher, 18 July 1983.

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# Elizabeth Kee

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1899-1975

by William H. Hardin



*SINCE the beginning of our nation's history, politics and government have been dominated by men. Although Elizabeth Kee first entered the U.S. Congress as the widow of a successful and powerful man, her own ability to represent her constituents led to her election in her own right every two years from 1952 until 1964, when she retired.*

*During her tenure in Congress, Kee focused her attention on the problems of veterans and of the unemployed, two groups substantially represented among the residents of her southern West Virginia constituency. Her understanding of the threat of imported oil and its impact on the lives of the people of her district, coupled with her ability to push for her issues over a long period of time, allowed her to become one of the most successful members of the U.S. House of Representatives.*

Politics in West Virginia have been dominated by men since the beginnings of statehood. Since the founding of this country, men have maintained control of the positions of power, not only at the state and local levels, but also in national office. Although some women have managed to rise above the prejudices of the larger society to achieve some success in state and local politics, few have been able to develop a strong political base. One woman who did become a political force in her own right was Elizabeth Kee, the first and only woman to represent West Virginia in Congress.

The foundation of Elizabeth Kee's political career was her husband's noteworthy 18-year tenure in Congress.(1) She soon, however, established her own reputation in both Washington and West Virginia. John Kee's position as chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee expanded the couple's contact with important and influential people — President Harry Truman, Secretary of State Dean Acheson, and Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, these contacts placed the Kees at the top of official and social life in Washington.(2) Not content to rest on her husband's

accomplishments, Elizabeth Kee worked fervently to establish her own reputation.

Her work included help for veterans and relief of unemployment and poverty. As chair of the Subcommittee on Veterans' Hospitals of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, she fought for improved health care, especially for her home district, which had a high percentage of veterans among the population. After working as John Kee's secretary for 18 years, she not only knew the needs of veterans, but had made significant contacts within her district. She also worked to aid the state's unemployed and disadvantaged people. Her untiring efforts to promote a program of technical assistance culminated in the Accelerated Public Works Program.

The 20-year period following World War II was one of mass unemployment and poverty during which the people of southern West Virginia suffered hardship and economic despair. During these years, many West Virginians migrated out of the state, and those who remained were filled with despair, gloom, and an increasing resentment toward the "powers that be" — primarily government and big business.(3) The people believed that cheap oil imports and advancing mine technology were primarily responsible for their suffering.(4) Elizabeth Kee provided a tenacious and bold voice for the people of southern West Virginia during this period. By the time she retired in 1964, she had established her own identity as a congressional force, overcoming the handicaps of being thought of only as a prominent congressman's wife and of being a woman in male-dominated politics.

Born Maude Etta Simpkins at Radford, Virginia, on June 7, 1899, she was the seventh child of John Jesse Wade Simpkins and Cora French Hall Simpkins.(5) She later changed her name to Elizabeth and, following high school, attended the Roanoke Business College. During World War I, she worked as a secretary for the *Roanoke Times* before marrying James Alan Frazier, a Norfolk & Western Railroad clerk. They had three children: James Alan, Jr., later known as Congressman Jim Kee; Frances, who suffered from polio; and a third child, who died in infancy. The couple was divorced after World War I. Four years later, Elizabeth married John Kee, a prominent Bluefield lawyer and state senator.(6)

John Kee was elected to Congress in 1932 and became chairman of the powerful House Foreign Affairs Committee. Elizabeth served as her husband's secretary for 18 years, learning the workings of government inside and out. It was she who made direct contact with the people of her husband's district. As a result, she started to develop a keen awareness of how to deal with constituents.(7) She treated them with kindness and courtesy, which the voters remembered 20 and 30 years later. She was also a tireless worker, often keeping her sister Hazel and brother Frank, who were also employed by John Kee, working far into the night. Together, they typed, printed, and mailed thousands of letters.(8) This determination to keep every constituent happy helped consolidate a solid political base for the Kees.

Because of her husband's continuing ill health in the late 1940s, Elizabeth Kee not only nursed him, but assumed a greater role in managing his office. She became more deeply immersed in, and knowledgeable about, the affairs of Congress and local politics. By the time John Kee died in May 1951, Elizabeth was, for all practical purposes, running the office.(9)

Following John Kee's death, there was a tremendous rush from many southern West Virginia Democrats for the vacant seat. The early frontrunner was a Bluefield attorney, Walter Vergil Ross, a veteran of many years in the state legislature and the apparent choice of organized labor.(10) According to Jim Kee, his mother had no idea of running immediately following her husband's death.(11) The prevailing view was that she should be retained as secretary. She was only mentioned as a possible compromise candidate because of the large stable of contenders. In the beginning, she was not considered a serious candidate for the vacancy.(12)

Apparently, the thought of serving as another congressman's secretary, along with remarks circulated throughout the district that John Kee had been a political hack, kept in office by the Democratic Party, prompted Mrs. Kee to seek the nomination.(13) Two weeks after her husband's death, Elizabeth Kee announced her candidacy for his unexpired term, stating: "I would not consent to serve as an executive secretary to an incoming member from our district, unfamiliar as he would be with Congressional office procedure,"(14) an obvious reference to many Kee projects pending in Congress.

The idea of a woman running for national office startled and unsettled many West Virginia political observers. The conventional wisdom of the old political guard considered Mrs. Kee a good secretary, but certainly not a good politician.(15) Labor leaders, however, who earlier had been leaning toward Vergil Ross, began to shift their support to Elizabeth Kee. About a week before the Democratic District Committee meeting, William Blizzard, president of UMW District 17, and George Titler, president of UMW District 29, both gave their full endorsement to Mrs. Kee.(16)

This break apparently came after Jim Kee and George Titler "sat down and made up some plans."(17) These plans included contacting many of the influential politicians throughout the district to find out just where Mrs. Kee stood with them. John Kee had several projects pending in Congress, and it became increasingly apparent that the election of a person outside the Kee family could jeopardize those projects.(18) Jim Kee explained:

We had so many damned projects pending, we knew if somebody else would come, hell, there's no way to explain to them what to do. There's just some things you live with, and you know and understand, and you just can't help it.(19)

Obviously, certain people would profit more from the completion of these projects than would others. These pending projects tied many of the Fifth District's political leaders to the Kees, creating a strong

political base. As these political connections became more evident, Democratic Party moguls quickly joined Blizzard, Titler, and Judge R.D. Bailey of Wyoming County in support of Elizabeth Kee's candidacy.(20)

Political maneuvering and support gave Mrs. Kee the Democratic nomination, but she faced a stiff Republican challenge from Cyrus H. Gadd, a Princeton lawyer. The Republicans immediately revealed their campaign strategy by calling the election a referendum on President Harry Truman's policies.(21) Attempting to show the national significance of the special congressional election, the pro-Republican *Bluefield Daily-Telegraph* reported, "... the eyes of the entire nation will be on the district when the voters trek to the polls to elect a member of the House of Representatives."(22)

The campaign degenerated into attacks upon the Kee's connections with the oil industry. The most venomous assault connected the Kees to Senator Robert Kerr, a multi-millionaire Oklahoma oil man. Gadd insisted that Kerr supported the Kees because they supported the flow of oil into the United States, an anathema in a coal-producing district.(23)

Elizabeth Kee, although not denying oil connections,(24) turned the tables on Gadd with her own revelation of the Republican candidate's connections to big oil. The pro-Democratic *Bluefield Sunset-News* printed an editorial alleging that Gadd was connected to oil interests such as Walter Hallahan, president of Plymouth Oil, and the oil-rich Pews of Philadelphia.(25)

The Gadd campaign floundered with the public exposure that many of his political contributions came from oil sources. His efforts were further impaired by the disclosure that most of Gadd's campaign statements, which had appeared regularly in the *Daily-Telegraph*, were being written by Hallahan's publicity personnel.(26)

Nevertheless, Mrs. Kee faced the toughest challenge of her political career in this special election of 1951, defeating Cyrus Gadd by only 8500 votes. Although she carried every county in the district, many of the larger towns — Bluefield, Welch, Williamson, and Gadd's hometown of Princeton — voted for the Republican. It was the heavy voter turnout in the mining camps that provided the margin of victory for Mrs. Kee.(27)

After the election, Elizabeth Kee moved quickly to consolidate her power and to increase her popularity. She was never again seriously challenged in a general election and usually ran unopposed in primaries. She reached the height of her popularity in 1958 when, after running unopposed in the primary election, she garnered an unbelievable 99.8% of the vote in the general election against Republican George A. Daugherty.(28) With such popularity, she could devote her energy to her work in Congress rather than to re-election efforts.

Congresswoman Kee's attention was focused primarily on making life better for the people of West Virginia. She followed a pattern established by her husband, who was known as a progressive, or New

Deal, Democrat. The philosophy of these Democrats was built on concern for the "common man" and minority groups, and the struggle to improve economic conditions for more people.(29) Elizabeth Kee's voting record reveals an emphasis on social and economic issues.

Some of Mrs. Kee's most vigorous work concerned relieving the unemployment problem in southern West Virginia, which had reached a critical point in the 1950s. She was quick to cite "Big Oil" and government support of oil imports as the primary cause of unemployment in West Virginia. Congresswoman Kee remarked, "[T]his condition has been caused by the persistent and substantial increase in the importation of cheap foreign residual fuel oil."(30) As early as 1952, she tied cheap oil imports to unemployment in the coal industry when she stated, "I strongly feel that we of the United States Congress have a solemn obligation to correct this unfair situation, and return our American citizens to gainful employment."(31) Attacking the oil industry, she declared, "[B]ig oil . . . had no sympathy for our working men, who are victims of international exploitations."(32)

To alleviate unemployment, Kee began pushing for a domestic technical assistance program drawn from the Point Four foreign aid program that was closely associated with her husband.(33) This assistance program would be designed to train people in certain important fields, such as health care, agriculture, education, and public administration. Once this program was functioning, the government would pull out. As one Point Four proponent said, "[T]hey were priming the pump."(34) Congresswoman Kee said, "We urgently need a . . . positive and comprehensive program of assistance for our low-income, rural families . . . a Point Four Program of technical assistance at home as well as abroad should be enacted immediately."(35)

Mrs. Kee pointed out the social problems associated with unemployment in West Virginia when she said:

Women, perhaps more than anyone else, understand the significance of the situation from a family and social point of view. These wives and mothers have made a plea to me for help because their husbands and sons are forced to leave their homes and children to seek work elsewhere, due to the mass unemployment now existing in West Virginia. They are going into Ohio and Michigan and any other state where there is a possibility that they will find work . . . The situation has serious implications. Our families should be encouraged to remain together, yet by failing to put a stop to the condition responsible for the cleavage that is developing, this government is sponsoring a wholesale assault upon our family life.(36)

Throughout the late 1950s, she was increasingly frustrated, as her technical assistance legislation was either blocked, stalled, or vetoed. Attacking President Eisenhower's veto, she declared, ". . . on two occasions, Congress has passed what I believed was sound legislation. The President . . . vetoed the legislation. The time has come to get off dead center."(37)

Getting off dead center began with the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960. Representative Kee had tied her proposals, and the hopes of the Fifth District, to his election. The mood of Kee and her constituents began to brighten after Kennedy became president. As she revealed, "[W]e were all preoccupied with despair . . . a despair and bitterness sustained and fed by the absence of any new program that might offer new paths for economic growth and new employment." (38)

The new program came in the form of the Accelerated Public Works Act. The main purpose of the program was to assuage recession and unemployment, primarily through self-help programs. To put teeth into the plan, federal funds for public works were made available when unemployment reached a serious point. (39) Most of Elizabeth Kee's original ideas were incorporated into the Act, which was expanded into a national program. A year after its initiation, Mrs. Kee observed, "[B]ecause of the extremely high percentage of unemployment, I knew the Accelerated Public Works program would provide the only method available for our citizens to help themselves." (40)

The Area Redevelopment Administration's (ARA) agencies, which allocated revenues for the program, were put to full use in southern West Virginia. Under the aegis of the ARA, money was made available for industrial loans, grants for water systems, retraining of men and women for new jobs, and other programs designed to alleviate poverty. (41) Although political machinations spawned fraud and mismanagement of funds in some cases, Elizabeth Kee believed the goal of relieving poverty and unemployment was addressed by the program. (42) Congresswoman Kee summed up redevelopment programs in a speech to Congress: "The seed for economic growth — that term symbolized the purpose and spirit of ARA." (43)

The program did stimulate economic growth and reduce unemployment in southern West Virginia. A primary result of ARA's technical assistance program was the construction of a number of lakes and lodges, such as the New River Gorge, which led to the development of recreational and tourist facilities and attractions. (44) Because she worked assiduously for nearly a decade, Representative Kee deserves much credit for nurturing the seed that brought a measure of economic relief to West Virginia. (45)

Elizabeth Kee was also concerned with the plight of veterans. Through membership on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, she sponsored progressive legislation that provided better service and facilities at many veterans' hospitals. The period following World War II and the Korean War brought the stark realization that there were many American veterans who needed long-term, continuous, or regular medical care. As the federal government took greater responsibility for the care of veterans, the Veterans' Administration expanded rapidly. Mrs. Kee had developed an understanding of veterans' needs through nearly 20 years of working with the large number of former service men in southern West Virginia. (46)



Serving on the Veterans' Affairs Committee was anything but glamorous. The Committee was often bogged down in statistics, details, and bureaucratic red tape. Many of the hearings and reports dealt with topics such as investment of insurance funds, burial allowances, eligibility for benefits, judicial review of veterans' claims, non-service-related pensions, and many other important, but time-consuming, investigations. Elizabeth Kee, however, saw her membership on the Committee as an opportunity to help veterans, many of whom lived in her district.

She led a determined and effective effort from her position as chair of the subcommittee on veteran's hospitals. Working mainly through this subcommittee, she believed that "... more attention should be devoted to the welfare of this country's veterans .... To begin with, they [veterans' hospitals] just aren't getting the appropriations they need from Congress." (47)

Most of Elizabeth Kee's efforts as chair of the subcommittee on hospitals was directed toward health care for veterans, pay raises for medical personnel, improvement of older hospital facilities, and construction of new veterans' hospitals. She said, "You just can't economize at the expense of the veteran. And I know the American people — regardless of how much they want government spending cut — I know they feel that way." (48) In hearing after hearing, she recounted the debt owed to veterans through historical precedent and moral obligation. From a historical point of view, she stated:

In reviewing the history of legislation pertaining to the veterans and their dependents, we are impressed with two fundamental principles firmly established by the Congress of the United States. First, the recognition of a federal obligation to provide liberal benefits for those who bore the ardors of service and their dependents; and second, a constructive progress in the development of the system of benefits to meet changed conditions and resultant needs. (49)

She carried this justification further by claiming a moral imperative: "This issue is a moral one. So long as the government asserts the right to draft young men for military service, I feel that it assumes, at the same time, sizable responsibilities for their future welfare." (50)

Elizabeth Kee saw the need for more money as the persistent problem in veterans' health care. Again, as with the ARA, she had to wait. She saw her long, arduous work in the 1950s in support of veterans come to fruition in the 1960s, when much legislation improving veterans' hospitals was passed. (51) She pursued the cause of veterans throughout her career in Congress with the full belief that the American people felt the same way she did. Her six successful (nearly uncontested) campaigns for Congress lent credibility to this belief.

Failing health forced Elizabeth Kee's retirement at the age of 69 after the 1964 session of Congress. Following 32 years in Washington, she returned to her home in Bluefield, where she remained active in community projects. On February 15, 1975, West Virginia's first congresswoman died of a massive hemorrhage following abdominal



surgery.(52) Her legacy is the trail she blazed for other women to follow. She was a congresswoman who was accepted on her own merits and for her own accomplishments and a woman who overcame many of the sexual barriers and stereotypes associated with West Virginia politics.

### ENDNOTES

1. William H. Hardin, "John Kee and the Point Four Compromise," *West Virginia History* (Fall 1979), 41:1.
2. 82 Cong. Rec., A5297, 1st sess.
3. 88 Cong. Rec., 21538, 1st sess.
4. 82 Cong. Rec., 9700, 2nd sess.
5. "Elizabeth Kee," *Current Biography* (1954), p.371.
6. Interview with Hazel Hall Simpkins, Salem, VA, 11 July 1983.
7. Interview with James Kee, Fayetteville, WV, 29 March 1980.
8. Interview with Frank T. Simpkins, Roanoke, VA, 11 July 1983.
9. James Kee Interview; *Bluefield Daily-Telegraph*, 17 June 1951.
10. *Bluefield Daily-Telegraph*, 17 May 1951.
11. James Kee Interview.
12. *Bluefield Daily-Telegraph*, 17 May 1951.
13. James Kee Interview.
14. *Bluefield Daily-Telegraph*, 22 May 1951.
15. James Kee Interview.
16. *Bluefield Daily-Telegraph*, 27 May 1951.
17. James Kee Interview.
18. *Bluefield Daily-Telegraph*, 8 July 1951.
19. James Kee Interview.
20. *Bluefield Daily-Telegraph*, 29 May 1951.
21. *Bluefield Daily-Telegraph*, 17 June 1951.

22. *Bluefield Daily-Telegraph*, 18 June 1951.
23. *Bluefield Daily-Telegraph*, 12 July 1951.
24. Lyndon Johnson to John Kee, 24 October 1940, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, House of Representatives Collection, Austin, TX. There is evidence that John Kee received campaign contributions from oil interests through Lyndon Johnson, throughout the 1940s, but particularly in 1940.
25. *Bluefield Sunset-News*, 12 July 1951.
26. *Bluefield Daily-Telegraph*, 15 July 1951.
27. *Bluefield Daily-Telegraph*, 18 July 1951.
28. *West Virginia Blue Book, 1959* (Charleston: Jarrett Printing Co., 1959), p. 363.
29. Alonzo L. Hamby, "Sixty Million Jobs and the People's Revolution: The Liberals, the New Deal, and World War II," *The Historian* 30 (August 1968), 578-79.
30. 83 Cong. Rec., A4394, 1st sess.
31. 82 Cong. Rec., 9700, 2nd sess.
32. 83 Cong. Rec., A2828, 1st sess.
33. Interview with Walter Judd, Washington, D.C., 4 June 1984.
34. Hearings before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on the International Cooperation Act of 1949, 81 Cong., 1st sess. (1949).
35. 85 Cong. Rec., 12116, 1st sess.
36. Hearings before the House Ways and Means Committee on the Trade Extension Act of 1953, 83 Cong., 1st sess.
37. 86 Cong. Rec., 17944, 1st. sess.
38. 87 Cong. Rec., 16333, 1st sess.
39. Senate Committee on Public Works, Report on the Accelerated Public Works Program, Report 1052, 88 Cong., 2nd sess.
40. 85 Cong. Rec., 12116, 1st sess.
41. Senate Committee on Public Works.
42. 88 Cong. Rec., 21539, 1st sess.; James Kee Interview.
43. 88 Cong. Rec., 21539, 1st sess.
44. *Ibid.*
45. Interview with Fred Schwengel, Washington, D.C., 4 June 1984.
46. James Kee Interview.
47. 87 Cong. Rec., 9481, 1st sess.
48. 87 Cong. Rec., 8383-8387, 1st sess.

49. 83 Cong. Rec., 15831, 2nd sess.
50. 84 Cong. Rec., 309, 1st sess.
51. *New York Times*, 4 November 1963.
52. 94 Cong. Rec., H1011, 1st sess.; *Washington Post*, 17 February 1975.

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# Naomi M. Garrett

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1906-

by Ethel O. Davie



NAOMI M. Garrett is an "adopted daughter," of whom West Virginia is justly proud. Her contributions to education, scholarship, and race relations are measured by international standards. She was one of the first black women to complete doctoral studies in French at Columbia University; she was one of the first scholars to devote attention to black francophone writers; and she was one of the early supporters of the international Friendship Force, an organization that encourages ordinary citizens to become acquainted with citizens of other countries. For 25 years, she inspired the students of modern foreign languages at West Virginia State College and served as adviser for foreign students. Her research into French, Caribbean, and African writers has brought her international recognition as a scholar and lecturer. Dr. Garrett's contributions to West Virginia are multiplied through her students who have become educators, writers, and citizens of the world.

The library building in Columbia, South Carolina, was grand and imposing, but the little girl wondered why she was not allowed inside. This was the Deep South of the early 1900s, where strict segregation of races was the law and this child's grandfather had been run out of the state for daring to teach blacks to read. Although her grandfather was never heard from again, the spark of learning had been passed from one generation of her family to another, and the desire for education had become a deep and constant motivation for them all. In the face of painful obstacles created by segregation, Naomi would persevere. She would go on to become a distinguished educator who had a remarkable impact on her adopted state of West Virginia.

Naomi M. Garrett was born in Columbia, South Carolina, in 1906, one of a family of ten children. Her mother, Anna Maria Threewitts, was a supervisor of Negro schools for the county, and her father, a lawyer and college professor, served briefly as Vice President of Allen University. A graduate of that university, he had gained a law

degree by reading the law under the supervision of a local attorney, as was the custom of the day. Befriended by a white Northerner who had compassion for a struggling family man, Casper George Garrett would never in later life turn his back on any youngster who needed help in getting an education. The young Garretts knew beyond any doubt that learning was the key to success and took for granted that they would go to college.

A natural ability and native intelligence made early schooling easy for Naomi. A high school graduate at age 16, she received her baccalaureate degree from Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina, in 1927. It was time to go to work, but, at first, success was elusive. Her first employer was a despotic, miserly man who required new teachers to live at his house, where they hardly had enough to eat. Youthful teachers were terrorized by this bully, who did not allow them out of the house after dark and who often refused them permission to visit parental homes. The homesick young girl's only solace was found in the classroom, where her pupils were poor, rural children almost as old as she. When Naomi finally rebelled and would not return the following year, the principal vindictively sent derogatory letters to prospective employers so that no one would offer her a job.<sup>(1)</sup> What a crushing blow for the valedictorian of her high school and college classes!

At the last moment, Bettis Academy, a small South Carolina school, needed a replacement teacher, and Naomi was given a chance. After two years, she had succeeded so well that officials did not want to lose her when she left to take a higher paying position at the Negro high school in Clinton, South Carolina. The Clinton school was a good one and the job was interesting, but Naomi discovered that teachers in the town's white school were earning twice the salary offered to black teachers. Clearly, more education was the only way to beat the segregated system, so she determined to earn a higher degree. A scholarship from Atlanta University provided the opportunity, and, after a year and a half of study she earned the M.A. in French. Her next teaching position was at a college in Kittrell, North Carolina.

For years, Naomi had been teaching languages: French, Spanish, and Latin. The little girl who wasn't allowed into the public library had always been fascinated by foreign countries and cultures. Her father, who taught Latin, and an older brother who was stationed in France during World War I, encouraged this interest. She dreamed of going to France, but this was impossible on a teacher's small salary. In 1939, however, wages began to rise and talk was that in Washington, D. C., the federal government was paying the enormous salary of \$115 a month. That summer she joined many of her friends who were taking examinations for government jobs. Naomi was offered a job by the United States Bureau of Engraving. To leave the teaching profession was difficult, but this opportunity was a shortcut to earning passage on an ocean liner. Unfortunately, the war in Europe put an end to her hopes at the moment that the money was at hand. Naomi went back to

teaching, her first love, and accepted a position at a junior high school in Baltimore.

Big-city schooling was very different from the campus of a small, private college in North Carolina. There were 2,100 children in a school built for fewer than 1,000. As often happens to new teachers, she was assigned classes of slow learners who had severe discipline problems, but she managed to convince them all that she could handle "bad kids" and teach them something. By now her range of experience had broadened from classes in the rural South to those in a metropolitan area and from eighth grade to college level. In 14 years, she had become a capable, seasoned teacher, able to cope with any educational situation. After only one year, the Baltimore school system offered her permanent tenure, an unheard of distinction.

At the same time, Naomi received an invitation that would alter the course of her career and would result in unexpected international interests and scholarly achievements. Ultimately named Doctor of Letters in a Denison University Honorary Degree, she would be cited as a:

... perceptive student of languages and literature, talented scholar, author and critic, beloved colleague, master teacher and counselor, able educational consultant to our government, internationally recognized authority on Caribbean culture.(2)

She was invited by the United States Department of State to join the government's English Project in Haiti. This involved a two-year assignment to teach in a French-speaking lycee and on the faculty of law at the University of Haiti. The idea was to send a team of master teachers to teach English to young Haitians, thereby securing their interest and friendship for the United States. A War Service Certificate later awarded by Project Coordinator, Nelson A. Rockefeller, attested to her "valuable services rendered during the war years while serving as a member of the official staff."(3)

The Haitian teaching experience was the start of a lifelong interest in helping young people from other countries and was also the awakening of a deep, scholarly interest. As it happened, a generation of young poets, many of whom later became famous, were actively engaged in creative writing at the capital, Port-au-Prince. Listening, discussing, learning, Naomi developed an abiding interest in works that were little known in America at the time. Her obvious scholarly ability prompted her former professor and mentor, Mercer Cook, a well-known academic and literary critic, to persuade her to go to Columbia University in New York City. A Rosenwald Fellowship for 1944-45 provided the necessary funds. Within two years, Naomi M. Garrett became the first black woman to matriculate for a doctoral degree in French at the Columbia Faculty of Philosophy and Letters. Her dissertation, *The Renaissance of Haitian Poetry*, was later published in Paris and became a widely used college textbook in this country.(4)

Columbia, in those days, was an exciting place for a student of French literature. Many French writers, exiles from the Nazi Occu-



pation, were in New York. Many more arrived when the war ended. It was the place to meet such famous authors as Camus, Sartre, de Beauvoir, and Vercors. The University's own professors were distinguished scholars and writers, and the intellectual atmosphere was both animated and inspiring. Past experience with demanding professors at Atlanta University and two years in French-speaking Haiti were useful preparation for the research she would do, and Naomi's scholarly talents deepened and matured. A Columbia University Fellowship in 1946-47 allowed her to complete the required coursework before she considered the offer of a teaching post at West Virginia State College.

When Professor Garrett came to West Virginia for the first time, she fell in love with the beautiful campus surrounded by wooded green hills. She was to remain at the College for 25 years as a valued member of the Foreign Language Department. A Ford Foundation grant enabled her to complete her dissertation at Columbia, and go back to West Virginia State with a Ph.D. in French in September 1954. Dr. Garrett served as Chair of the Foreign Language Department from 1958 to 1971. When she retired from the College in May 1972, she was honored at the 77th Commencement Exercises for 25 years of outstanding service:

Assiduous advocate of humanistic learning, inveterate supporter of intercultural studies, compassionate and empathetic counselor of students, her positive impact was enormous.(5)

This recognition could only suggest the extent of her influence on West Virginia State College graduates, not just within the state, but around the nation and in other parts of the world.

Her profound scholarship and gracious manner, combined with a sparkling personality, soon endeared Naomi to State College students. Her flawless French and her facility in Spanish and German made her a valuable resource for the growing college, and her research soon developed into a series of literary articles. Her long-awaited trip to France finally took place in 1954; indeed, she had found time for post-doctoral study at the Sorbonne, University of Paris.

The Supreme Court's decision in the case of *Brown vs. the Board of Education* brought an end to an era of segregated education. The West Virginia State Board of Education immediately moved to open the schools to students of all races. Under the leadership of President William J. L. Wallace, white students were welcomed at West Virginia State College. Throughout the Kanawha Valley, businesses moved to eliminate racial segregation. A totally new and different student population came to West Virginia State College as students became aware of the quality education offered there. White students were quick to admire and respect Professor Garrett and to fill her classes. The number of students in the Language Department grew to the point that local school teachers, trained at the College, began to have a positive impact on the Valley and surrounding areas.(6)

During the 1960s, almost all of the foreign language teachers in the Valley had gained their training at West Virginia State College, and

all had been Dr. Garrett's students. She became a model for these teachers, many of whom are still teaching today. The best of them were inspired by her model of lifelong learning and wholehearted interest in other lands and other peoples. Following her example, they take their students abroad to observe and study. Thus, many youngsters in the Valley lead richer lives because of the experience. The teachers she trained transmit her appreciation of all peoples regardless of race, nationality, color, or religion. They organize their classroom instruction on the basis of the best and most recent pedagogic principles. In 1982, three of her former students attended a seminar on African literature written in French that was held in Dakar, Senegal. They were there because Naomi Garrett had taught them the literature during their college years. They discovered too, that all were still following methods acquired from their revered teacher. In spite of the fact that these teachers had spent years in graduate study and held degrees from various universities, they agreed that her pedagogy had not gone out of style, and that her inspiration was a lasting one.(7) The extent to which these teachers and others like them have transmitted this influence to additional hundreds of students has not been assessed, but her former students often acknowledge their debt and express their appreciation. Over the years, typical letters have paid tribute to Professor Garrett's influence:

You have truly made my four years at State meaningful. Just think what I would have missed had I not met you 2½ years ago.(8)

Another writes:

I hope your students of today appreciate you as much as they should. We may not always have shown it, but we really did. And more so, the older we get. . . .(9)

There is yet another aspect to the influence of Naomi Mills Garrett on the people of West Virginia, for her international interests continued to expand. In 1958, she was awarded a Fulbright grant to go to Paris to study African poets writing in French. Paris was the center of an intellectual ferment of black writers from all parts of the world. Naomi soon became acquainted with many influential writers from Africa and the Caribbean. At the home of Mercer Cook—later the United States ambassador to Niger and Senegal—writers gathered to discuss problems and concerns. There she met and established a lasting friendship with Léopold S. Senghor, the poet who would become the president of Senegal. The poet Aimé Césaire, influential mayor of Fort-de-France, Martinique, and the late René Maran, author of the controversial novel, *Batouala*, were among her other friends.

That same year, some of the Fulbright Fellows in Paris were asked to lecture in French universities as a gesture of American good-will. Professor Garrett's talks on black American writers and the Negro contribution to the nation's culture were very popular with French students, who prided themselves on a tolerant attitude in race relations and who were interested in learning about her personal experience as a

black woman in the United States. Naomi freely discussed discrimination and the insults to which blacks were frequently subjected, but as a loyal, well-educated, tolerant citizen, she maintained a balanced perspective. The State Department then asked her to go to Senegal to lecture for an African audience.

It was an era when students shouted, "What about Little Rock?" to anyone who upheld the merits of the United States. Unknown to her, a large contingent of radical students in Dakar was prepared to boo and march out *en masse* at the least weakness of this "government lackey." Dr. Garrett disarmed her critics immediately by recounting some of the worst instances of racial intolerance with which she was familiar. She insisted, however, that, with all its faults, the United States was her own beloved country. Impressed by her obvious honesty and lack of equivocation, the dissident students cheered wildly. Her lecture was a triumph. As the *Baltimore Afro-American* newspaper boasted later, "She really held them spellbound." The reporter obviously relished telling the story in a long article:

Miss Naomi M. Garrett . . . really created a stir on her recent visit to Africa. . . . Her big triumph came in Dakar (Senegal) where she addressed an audience that not only filled the auditorium, but had half as many again pressing around outside hoping to get in. At the end she got a tremendous ovation. . . . She really held them spellbound. . . . you couldn't help but be proud of her.(10)

Back in Europe, Naomi traveled to the Second World Congress of Negro Writers and Artists held in Rome in 1959. There she met more writers and re-established earlier friendships. By the time she returned to West Virginia State College after the lengthy sojourn abroad, she had become an authority on black writers of French expression, and she set about publishing scholarly articles on the subject, lecturing at conferences, and introducing the material into her classroom. At a time when very few people in America knew anything about these African and Caribbean writers, she was thoroughly familiar with their works, knew the artists personally, and was well-prepared for the task of making this important literature more widely known. A 1969 letter to Dr. Garrett from the director of the Kentucky Foreign Language Conference, where she conducted a seminar, indicates how new this material was:

I heard particularly favorable comments on both the interest and quality of papers that were presented in the special section of Franco-Caribbean and Franco-African literature. . . . we sincerely appreciate your efforts to open up this new world to us.(11)

Students also began to take a sincere interest in these new writers from other parts of the world. A 1971 article in the *Providence* (Rhode Island) *Journal* indicates that Dr. Garrett was gratified that students were beginning to appreciate the subject matter she had for so long been teaching in West Virginia:

A black scholar who has been writing on Caribbean and African literature since the early 1940s finds that the college students of the '70s are discovering that literature with keen interest.(12)

At West Virginia State College, the foreign students became a special concern for Naomi. Years earlier, she had noticed an ill-clad Haitian student struggling through the winter snow, and she had befriended her. Others gravitated to her hospitable residence, and new arrivals soon became friends and special charges. From a very small, informal beginning with five students, her personal concern for homesick students evolved into a full-time position as foreign student advisor with 72 under her care by 1972. Her advocacy of the lonely, often penniless, and confused students became legendary at the college. In 1970, an evaluation of the foreign student program by a National Association of Foreign Student Advisors' consultant gave the entire project high praise and contained this unusually personal comment:

In fact, the foreign student advisor has that indefinable quality that makes her a "natural" for her job. Her relationship with the students is excellent.(13)

Not only did Dr. Garrett care for the well-being of foreign students, but she also felt that their presence on campus was of great value to the entire student body, the faculty, and the general community. This conviction was the impetus for a series of programs designed to acquaint others with various parts of the world. The community's first public international dinner and variety show was presented in May 1961 under her auspices with great success.(14) It became a popular yearly event, giving the public an opportunity for firsthand knowledge of foreign peoples and their homelands.

For a period of more than 15 years, she and her students traveled the Kanawha Valley and beyond, presenting lectures and slides on other lands. The foreign students were frequently adopted and sponsored by clubs and churches throughout the area. Many local citizens have fond memories of the students they assisted and have often sent letters of appreciation:

Everyone is so pleased that you came to bring your wonderful foreign students. For the young people and adults alike, the experience was thrilling and satisfying.(15)

On campus, students were exposed to other world cultures through these representatives of other countries. As a result, Dr. Garrett succeeded in awakening an interest in other parts of the globe for many who normally would not have been concerned. Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity recognized her "profound interest in people and . . . dedication and loyalty to foreign students" by selecting her 1970 Alpha Mother of the Year.(16)

Many of her students developed international interests that were expressed in business, education, the military, and private affairs. For example, one of them founded the International Friendship Force, Atlanta, which opened its West Virginia Chapter in 1979, sponsored by

President and Mrs. Carter, and Governor and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, IV. Its first local venture was the exchange of 250 Charlestonians with an equal number of Germans from the town of Gelsenkirchen. Dr. Garrett was co-director of a workshop on German culture intended to prepare the local travelers for their new experience. She also took part in the exchange.

Today one can travel to many parts of the globe where her name is well known. A 1970 article in the *Charleston Daily Mail* commented on her reception by Thai alumni of West Virginia State College in the city of Bangkok, where joyous reunions were staged during her visit to Thailand.(17)

As the result of another of her projects, West Virginians became involved in Crossroads Africa, the prototype of the Peace Corps. After the professor traveled to Africa as the leader of a group of students from some of the nation's most prestigious colleges in 1961, she encouraged more than a dozen students from West Virginia State College to take part over a period of several years. Local clubs and churches helped the young people earn the necessary funds for travel to Africa to build schools, medical facilities, and community centers with the help of their African counterparts. When students returned, they went into the community to lecture on their experiences. In this way, many more Kanawha Countians were provided firsthand information about other parts of the globe.

Naomi never stopped studying. With the grants she received, she studied Chinese culture at Cyrus Eaton's International Pugwash Conference, Nova Scotia in 1965; she studied Egyptian culture in Egypt under the sponsorship of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education in 1966; and she participated in the University of California/National Defense Education Act (NDEA)-sponsored Africa program at UCLA in 1968. The next year, the UCLA team traveled throughout East and West Africa for an extended period of study and observation. By this time, she was totally dedicated to the ideal of bringing an international dimension to education in West Virginia. Some ten years later, the Harvard Curriculum Report echoed ideas she and other enlightened teachers had long espoused:

... an educated American ... cannot be provincial in the sense of being ignorant of other cultures and other times. It is no longer possible to conduct our lives without reference to the wider world in which we live.(18)

Armed with this same conviction and often against strong opposition, Naomi Garrett tirelessly advocated modification of the college curriculum to incorporate more information about other cultures. She wanted the school, which in the 1960s had become a model "Living Laboratory of Human Relations," to increase the scope of its learning experiences. To this end, she organized a series of seminars and conferences on education for international understanding that featured experts from all parts of the United States and from many other countries. She encouraged other faculty members to travel and study.

For those who were unable to make such a commitment, Professor Garrett organized study seminars on campus, bringing in books, materials, and consultants. From 1965 to 1971, the Faculty Committee on Education for International Understanding, which she organized, conducted a series of seminars and forums and acted as a center for educational development.(19) To let her know that these efforts were understood and appreciated, letters of praise from the faculty began to arrive. One, from Professor David E. Koontz, Department of Education, declared, "May I say that I have found your work in the African seminars to be one of the most stimulating aspects of West Virginia State College's intellectual life for me personally."(20)

It was not long before the College had the capability to conduct an NDEA-sponsored summer institute in social sciences and humanities, as well as in-service programs for area teachers. The College's curriculum was soon enriched by the addition of a compulsory upper division seminar on foreign cultures, the first mandatory course of its kind in the state. In a report on the College's participation in a pilot project for international education, Dr. Garrett stated:

The College is guided by the philosophy that education is a continuous process, that knowledge of other peoples and their cultures is important to today's student, who will be forming attitudes and interpreting other nations and their civilizations to tomorrow's youth.(21)

The report placed great emphasis on the belief that teachers have tremendous influence on the kind of learning that reaches the community, remarking on the belief that "teachers are multipliers," transmitting ideas and commitment to a broad segment of society, and having the power to infuse an international dimension into community life.(22)

In addition to her three-fold duties at the College as teacher, department administrator, and foreign student advisor, Dr. Garrett still managed to find time to write and lecture. Her reputation as a scholar continued to grow with honorary listings in the *Dictionary of International Scholars*, *Dictionary of International Biography*, *World Who's Who of Women*, *Outstanding Educators of America*, *Who's Who Among Black Americans*, and *Two Thousand Women of Achievement*. She was often called upon to lecture and to act as consultant at regional and national conferences. She spoke at the Greensboro, North Carolina, Conference on the Study of Black Literature from Africa and the Caribbean (1967 and 1968) and the American Council for Teaching Foreign Languages' national workshop on black literature of French expression, Atlanta, Georgia (1972). She was also a member of the national selection committee for Fulbright scholars to France and Belgium in 1963, 1964, and 1971.

As a faculty member whose outstanding work attracted unusual professional attention, she was named Distinguished Professor at Rhode Island College in 1971. Following her retirement from West Virginia State College in 1972, Dr. Garrett was University Professor at



Denison University, Granville, Ohio, for two years and served as Visiting Professor from 1974 to 1979. After her second retirement, she taught for one semester at the University of Charleston. In May 1980, she was honored in the "Salute to Black Women" program sponsored by the Charleston-Institute Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. On that occasion, she received the following tribute from Governor John D. Rockefeller, IV:

On behalf of all West Virginians, I want to commend you for contributions to the world in which we live. This occasion sums up a life-time of excellence, in which you can take great pride.(23)

A world traveler, Dr. Garrett's journeys have taken her to the Caribbean, most of Europe and Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Mexico, and Canada. Much of this traveling was done in connection with world language and literature conferences, such as the First World Festival of Negro Arts, Dakar, Senegal; the Colloquium on Negritude, Dakar (at the invitation of President Senghor—1971); the 50th Anniversary Conference American Association of Teachers of French (AATF), Paris (1977); the 52nd annual conference AATF, Martinique (1979); the 53rd Conference AATF, Quebec (1980); the AATF African Literature symposium, Dakar and Morocco (1982). Other conferences included the International Council on Education for Teaching (ICET) World Assembly on Education, London (1972), and Cairo (1981).

Dr. Garrett has continued to serve her community and state by working on the boards of directors of many organizations: the Kanawha Pastoral Counseling Center, the American Association of University Women—Charleston Branch, the Friendship Force—West Virginia, and the Humanities Foundation. She pursues an active intellectual life, which includes writing and public talks, and is currently co-editor of the Caribbean Section, *Handbook of Latin American Studies*, Library of Congress.

In 1981 West Virginia State College honored this distinguished citizen of West Virginia by bestowing on her the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters. Commenting upon her long, outstanding career the citation states in part:

Few members of our faculty have had greater influence upon our students than Naomi M. Garrett . . . . She has spent the major portion of her professional life promoting intercultural relations among students of the world.(24)

This tribute, from the institution that she served with great distinction, expresses the regard that the college and the state have for Naomi Garrett, "gracious lady, master teacher, prodigious scholar and citizen of the world."(25)



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# Ann Kathryn Flagg

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1924-1970

by Leonard J. Deutsch



*NN Kathryn Flagg was a West Virginian who found fame and opportunity beyond the borders of her native state. Beginning a career in theater as a schoolgirl in Charleston, Flagg gained prominence as a member of a national theater touring company and as an award-winning playwright. Her plays explore the feelings and thoughts of people who are divided from one another by circumstances and the artificial barriers of birth, culture, race, and language.*

*Greatly honored during her lifetime and after her death, Flagg remains largely unknown in her native state. Her achievement—and her life—deserve recognition.*

Were stereotypes made so that she might have the pleasure of demolishing them? Born black in West Virginia, Ann Kathryn Flagg defied the assumption that nothing could be expected from one born of a "deprived" race in an "impoverished" state. Ms. Flagg seems never to have considered herself either deprived or impoverished, even if her parents were not wealthy. Growing up in the Charleston-Institute area, she emerged from a culturally-rich environment and achieved national recognition as a playwright before her untimely death at 46. Her talents as teacher, actress, dramatist, and her compassion as a human being permitted her to transcend the barriers of racism and to form many close friendships; many people, both black and white, speak with affection and admiration for this remarkable woman. If there is any irony in her story, it is that she seems to have achieved greater celebrity outside of her home state than within it. Her 1963 play, *Great Gettin' Up Mornin'*, for example, is available from Samuel French, Inc., the most prestigious publisher of drama in the country, but, until recently, no library in West Virginia had a copy in its collection. Similarly the Martin Luther King, Junior, Lab School in Evanston, Illinois, renamed its auditorium in tribute to Ms. Flagg. No such memorial exists in West Virginia to perpetuate her name.

There are, nonetheless, many West Virginians who fondly remember the Charleston-born girl who lived at 476 Sentz Street. Her parents, Frances Thomas and Francis Flagg, both Baptist and both 19 when they wed, did not have a successful marriage and separated while Ann was still a young girl. Feelings between the parents remained so bitter that years afterward, the father was denied entry to his daughter's wake in 1970. Differences had not been resolved by the time that her mother, still residing at the same Sentz Street address, died in 1975.

Ann was a popular and active student whose promise was recognized by her teachers. She attended Boyd Elementary and Boyd Junior High between 1929 and 1938, then, with other black youngsters in Charleston, went on to Garnet High School, graduating in 1941. One person who remembers her well is Ruth Norman, her tenth and twelfth grade English teacher at Garnet. Mrs. Norman, who had done graduate work in Speech and Dramatics at Columbia University, found Ann "excellent soil for me to plant seeds." It was Mrs. Norman who coached Ann for an acting role in her first high school play. She found that the young actress "loved writing and dramatics" and was possessed of an "unusual talent." Among the "qualities of greatness" she discerned in this "exceptional" student were creativity and intelligence.(1)

In the eleventh grade at Garnet, Ann Flagg had the good fortune to study under Lewis V. Barnes, guiding spirit of the Garnet Experimental Theater. Under his tutelage, Ann starred in a number of high school productions. Mr. Barnes was so impressed with her ability that he kept some of her unpublished writing and continued to treasure it long after her death.(2)

During the summers of her eleventh and twelfth grade years she acted in the West Virginia State College summer theater program. It is not surprising, then, that upon her graduation from Garnet in 1941, she chose to attend West Virginia State College, an institution that housed some of the most distinguished black intellectuals in the country.(3) Here she was encouraged and inspired by Professor Fannin Belcher, a drama critic, and something of a dramatist in his own right. In college she continued an intensive course in drama, both academic and extra-curricular, joining the West Virginia State Players and eventually serving as president of the group for one semester.(4) During this period she appeared in "The Shining Hour" and "Little Foxes," as well as in other plays. Before graduating magna cum laude with a degree in education (1945), she was elected to Student Council and was a member of Alpha Delta Sigma, the Honorary Scholastic Society.

Ann's career as an educator began in 1945 when she was hired to teach at Northampton County High School in Machipongo, Virginia. During her two years there, she organized an extra-curricular drama group. These students entered the Virginia State College Players' Tournament, where they received the second place award. Subsequently, they were invited to perform at the West Virginia State College Players' Tournament.(5)

Ann interrupted her teaching career to tour the country with the American Negro Repertory Players, working as stage manager and actress. In 1948, she returned to West Virginia where, for \$2025 per year, she taught at the all-black Dunbar High School in Fairmont. Her certification was primarily in English and secondarily in Spanish, but during the summer of 1950 she took courses at the University of Pittsburgh in speech problems and the teaching of speech, and for the next two years taught not only English and Spanish, but speech as well. During her four-year tenure at Dunbar High School she worked with many people who were to become her friends, and once again became active in organizing dramatic groups.(6) She was proud that the group she founded and supervised served the school and area with "the only cultural program of its type then open to Negroes in that community."(7) Her group received superior ratings in the West Virginia State High School Players' Tournament and began a cultural exchange program with a white school in the Fairmont area. When the Marion County Little Theater, a troupe of white players, had their annual awards dinner, they issued a special invitation to Miss Flagg's group to perform for them.

In the spring of 1952, Ann resigned her position at Dunbar High to make a significant career move: she took the job as director of the Children's Theater at Karamu House in Cleveland, Ohio. At prestigious Karamu—long noted as a racially-integrated center for experimental theater—Ms. Flagg found many outlets for her talents. As actress, she won rave reviews for her title role performances in Sophocles' *Antigone* and Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. Arthur Spalth, drama critic for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, lauded "the dignity with which Ann Flagg imbues her *Lysistrata*."(8) Colleague Rowena Jeffiffe years later recalled that Ann gave great power, conviction, and majesty to the role.(9)

In addition to performing in various roles, Ms. Flagg was responsible for selecting and adapting plays for children. Those produced at Karamu included "Half Chick," "Robin Hood," "Beauty and the Beast," "The Apple of Contentment," and "The Golden Goose." Two ballets, "Pandora" and "The Old Dancing Master," were narrated by Ann Flagg and Anthony Bass. Among her last adaptations for Karamu House was "Blue Bonnets," produced in June of 1960.(10)

Before she ended her nine-year association with Karamu, Ann discharged her duties conscientiously. Not only did she choose works that would be suitable for young audiences, but she was also responsible for casting, directing, consulting with the music, dance, and costume departments, as well as planning technical aspects of the productions. Her players, moreover, frequently appeared before various community groups, reading poetry, telling stories, and acting.(11)

Children were prepared for their roles in her classroom, which was referred to as "The Magic Carpet Room" by admiring colleagues. When Ann told her stories, there was magic in the room—the "magic that lifted minds and hearts to mountain tops."(12) Along with her

teaching duties, she served as Secretary-Treasurer of the Children's Theater Conference, Region 9 (Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana).

Despite her resounding success at Karamu, Ann felt it was time to develop her abilities as a playwright more fully. In 1961, she moved to Illinois and enrolled at Northwestern University, which enjoyed a considerable reputation for training writers.

By the time that she earned an M.A. in Theater, she had completed—in April 1963—what was to become her best known work: *Great Gettin' Up Mornin'*. She won \$200 and the play won First Place in the National Collegiate Playwriting Contest. Competing against entries from 93 colleges, the play was judged best of the year by a jury of two Broadway producers and two university professors. To her delight, she learned that CBS-TV was interested in her play for their 1964 Repertoire Workshop Series. Just as she was preparing to make her annual Christmas journey back to Charleston to spend the holiday with her mother, she discovered that CBS had chosen her script from the 350 they had considered. So, during the first week in January 1964, she flew to Hollywood to make final script changes and to help with the production. The show, starring Van Whitfield, Mark Dymally, Michelle Nichols, and Don Marshall, aired over CBS stations in Los Angeles, St. Louis, Chicago, Philadelphia, New York, Washington, D.C., and several other cities.(14)

To supplement the income from her graduate school assistantship, she worked part-time for the Evanston Consolidated School District. So satisfied were the school officials with her work that they offered her a full-time position; so comfortable did she feel in Evanston that she accepted. From 1963 until her death in 1970, she worked at Nichols High and Foster Elementary, which later became the Martin Luther King, Junior, Lab School.

Even while she lived in Illinois, she maintained close ties to West Virginia. When she visited her mother's Charleston home she gave radio and newspaper interviews,(15) and conferred with Stan Fedyszyn, director of the Kanawha Players, about producing her plays. He selected two. Sponsored by the Charleston Woman's Improvement League, the Kanawha Players appeared in *Great Gettin' Up Mornin'* and *Blueboy to Holiday—Over*. Ms. Flagg attended the initial stage performances of her works, which were presented on two consecutive nights at the Civic Center Little Theater.(16)

In her next career move, she accepted a post at Southern Illinois University as instructor of drama for the 1966-67 academic year. In Carbondale, her recurring health problems—asthma and emphysema—worsened, and she was hospitalized. Her troubles were compounded when she discovered that she and the African students on campus had a difficult time relating to one another. Further poisoning the atmosphere was a white colleague who was a bigot. During this troubled year, Ann returned to the Chicago area to deliver an address at the Conrad Hilton Hotel on December 29, 1966, entitled "Helping Children Understand the Contributions of the American Negro to American



Society". This paper attacked the omissions and distortions of American history.(17)

After she completed her year at Carbondale, Ann returned to her friends in Evanston. Although prejudice prevented her from living in the white section of town, she and a white female co-worker roomed together in the black community, and Ann enjoyed three productive teaching years, happily exploring the parameters of creative dramatics. Her respiratory problems continued to plague her, however, and on a school day in October she began coughing heavily and collapsed. Rushed to the nearest hospital, she never rallied; her death was attributed to acute obstructive emphysema. A memorial tribute in Evanston in November 1970 drew friends and admirers from many parts of the country, as did the June 1, 1973, rededication of the school auditorium, where so many students had polished their dramatic skills under her guidance.

Although her career as an actress was well known, more important to Ms. Flagg than being on the stage was writing for it. Four completed plays are available for review and analysis: *Great Gettin' Up Mornin'*, *Blueboy to Holiday—Over*, *A Significant Statistic*, and *Unto the Least of These*.(18) A longer work, *The Young Shall Die*, based on a poem by Carl Sandburg, was unfinished at the time of her death.(19)

*Great Gettin' Up Mornin'*—its title borrowed from a Negro spiritual—is set in an unspecified Southern town. The precise locale is not important because the play deals with a national issue of the time: the desegregation of the public schools. The curtain rises on what appears to be a typical American home. The black family in this home, however, has been subjected to a series of obscene telephone calls from irate citizens. It is the first day of the new school year and the calls are designed to dissuade the Logans from sending their six-year-old daughter, Tina, to the neighborhood's formerly all-white school.

While the main plot shows the courage of the idealistic Logans under duress (not only do they receive harassing phone calls but their house is attacked) and their conviction that equal educational opportunities offer the best hope for black children, the play also examines the fears and resistance to integration that created a divisive wedge in the black community. The Logan grandmother, for example, had once taught in an all-black school and cannot understand why her daughter and son-in-law are so eager to subject Tina to an experience that will not only be traumatic but that is potentially dangerous. Nor are the grandmother's apprehensions unfounded. Joanne Logan, Tina's mother, admits: "My baby is about to take a walk through hell this morning." A more vested resistance is offered by the superintendent of Negro schools who sees integration as a threat to his job. He represents the "handkerchief-heads" who seek to maintain the *status quo*. The black establishment is also willing to punish those who challenge the established order. Logan, a dentist, loses black business when his patients signal their disapproval of his civil rights stand by canceling their appointments.

While *Great Gettin' Up Mornin'* focuses on interracial conflict and intraracial tension, it transcends mere propaganda. Underlying the drama is an ironic wit that provides comic relief. More importantly, although Ms. Flagg was committed to the play's message, she was just as concerned with her art. "I liked the idea of a family under stress making a momentous decision in an hour-and-a-half," she told the reporter for *Jet Magazine*. The tight frame of the play required a "tension and economy of words, paring it down to the bare bones."<sup>(20)</sup> According to her editor at Samuel French, Inc., the contest judges were impressed not only with the play's human values, but with its "gathering suspense" and its "adroitness of technique."<sup>(21)</sup>

*Blueboy to Holiday—Over* was originally conceived as a play for children's theater, but it evolved into a fairly sophisticated study of how adults create racial antagonism in children.<sup>(22)</sup> At the beginning of the play eight-year-olds Willie Lee and Gary appear to be opposites: one is black, the other white; one is poor, the other rich; one is from the South, the other from the North; one speaks black English, the other standard English. When they meet in the park of a large northern city and befriend one another, we discover, in the course of their innocent conversation, that they actually have much in common. They are both human beings with basic needs, such as the need to play and the need to form friendships. Moreover, both boys are the sons of philandering fathers and over-solicitous mothers.

Willie Lee, up from Turnersville after a two-day ride on a hot bus, waits in the park while his mother tries to track down her husband, who is no longer at the address he had given her. Gary's suggestion that "maybe she'll have to get a private eye to find him," provokes Willie Lee's response: "She don't need none. She got good eyes." Unconsciously, Gary is revealing that *his* mother has hired a detective to keep track of his devious father.

As they share Gary's popcorn, take turns drinking at the water fountain, play catch with Gary's ball, and attack imaginary vermin, their activities assume symbolic significance. This is especially true when they pretend they are fliers. Gary, whose father has piloted an airplane, mimics the jargon of aviators and introduces Willie Lee to the phrase, "Blueboy to Holiday—Over." Before long they are engaged in an imaginary bombing mission, and Gary leads the attack on his father's office, insisting that his father's secretary not be spared. Mission accomplished, Willie Lee goes after *his* father. Then they bomb Washington, D.C., and other political targets.

They are interrupted in their play by the two mothers who have returned to reclaim their children. The two humorless women "glare at each other . . . over an impenetrable wall," and, when Gary wants to invite Willie Lee to lunch, both mothers are appalled by the notion. Much of their bitter dialogue, in fact, ironically echoes the other's. When she finds her son, Gary's mother says: "I've been looking all over the park for you. You're just like your father—I can't trust you a minute!" Similarly, when Willie Lee's mother discovers her son in the

company of a white boy, she exclaims: "I reckon you jes' like (your Father). I turn my back an' you take up with jes' anybody come along."

Although the boys find it easy to relate to one another, their mothers force them to separate. Ms. Flagg does not need to lecture her audience in this drama, and she doesn't. She simply captures the chatter of children and allows social commentary to emerge from the play's denouement: the enforced racial separation of the boys.

*A Significant Statistic* contains Ms. Flagg's most explicit protest. The play is saved from didacticism, however, by its dazzlingly experimental style. Dramaturgically, among Ms. Flagg's four one-act plays, it is the playwright's most unconventional work.

As with the previous two plays, *A Significant Statistic* is set in contemporary times. In her stage directions, Ms. Flagg indicates that the action takes place on "the shoulder of a highway skirting a muddy field" in the South. Then she startles us with the revelation that, although we are about to see and hear Jack Davis, a young civil rights worker, he is "dead throughout the play." The dramatic rendering of past incidents in his life and the lives of eighteen-year-old Mary Jane, Jack's black girlfriend, and Mrs. Willie Mae Harris, Mary Jane's mother, occurs "only in his memory and theirs"—in flashbacks. Ms. Flagg pulls Jack Davis back into life by moving him into the Harris' area of the stage through staging and lighting. Props are held to a bare minimum. Ms. Flagg thus achieves a striking freedom from the constraints of chronology.

Jack Davis has become a statistic and perhaps not even a significant one, he admits. As a murdered civil rights worker, he will go unmourned, unremembered. No one will care—except Mary Jane, her mother, and his friends.

At first Mrs. Harris had rejected Jack Davis' campaign to register black voters. As this scene is reenacted, Jack steps out of the cool light of death and into the warm light of his previous life. As Mrs. Harris talks to Jack, she never faces him: "She rises and steps downstage speaking toward the audience." When this scene ends and she abruptly begins talking under the bright center-stage light, we realize that her aversion to Jack as a "trouble-maker" has dissipated entirely. Having been evicted from her shanty, she hopes her tent will "hol' up till 'lection day when I votes my first vote." The man who delivers the tent is also the bearer of sad tidings: "I—I got some hard news, too. That boy—that Jack Davis—." The audience is not yet told what has happened to him but they sense from the women's reaction that he has been killed.

A subsequent scene conveys another fragment from the past: the moments when Mary Jane expressed to Jack her desire to join him in his cause and avowed her willingness to march, and suffer, if necessary. In yet another scene, Jack recalls her bravery despite the provocations and her egregious mistreatment in jail. Jack, shaken by the rape of

Mary Jane, tries to console her: "They do that to degrade you—to humiliate you. But they can't violate your spirit unless you let them!"

In the final scene, Jack, observing Mary Jane's resolve to press onward and continue the struggle, is ready to relinquish his hold on life. As Ms. Flagg indicates in her stage directions: "Jack's realization that the others will carry on his work release[s] him from the hold life has upon him—he can 'let go.'"

If *A Significant Statistic* is the playwright's most stylized drama, *Unto the Least of These*, though more conventional, is more poignant. While visiting her aunt, Jo Ellen Flagg, at Oberlin College, Ann stumbled upon a tombstone in the school library. That a tombstone would be part of a library's permanent collection was interesting enough; even more intriguing was the inscription indicating that it had belonged to a four-year-old fugitive slave who had died in 1853. No other information was available—only the notations on the stone itself.

Questions crowded into her mind: Who was this little boy, Lee Howard Dobbins? How had he come to Oberlin? "Why," Ms. Flagg asks in her preface, "would anyone risk the exposure of an important underground (railroad) station by erecting a tombstone to a four-year-old fugitive slave?" And who was the craftsman who had so deliberately cut this message in the stone?

*Unto the Least of These*, a work of fiction, carefully researched for historical authenticity, is set in a cemetery, in 1902, in Oberlin, Ohio. An old white man has returned with his two small grandchildren to locate the tombstone that his family, conductors on the underground railroad, had helped to erect before the Civil War when Gramps was eleven years old. From the dual perspective of boy and old man, he narrates and evaluates the events now half a century old. The grandson makes out the words "Let slavery perish" on the tombstone, and Gramps provides some background information about Lee Howard Dobbins, an orphan who had been led to Oberlin by his adoptive mother, only to die of consumption. Gramps, having befriended the sick black boy, now recalls: "As they lowered his little body into the ground I [thought] how lonely he'd be out here. So I made myself a secret vow to watch over him." A change in stage lighting inaugurates a scene change; the play shifts to the time when Gramps (Johnny) was eleven.

In the one long flashback of the play, we see Johnny distraught because his friend, Lee Howard, has been buried, and there is no tombstone to mark his grave. Johnny won't eat and, though he is white, he has nightmares in which he is pursued by slave catchers. Johnny's mother wants her family to leave the slave station and move further north, because Johnny "takes these things too much to heart." The father, Daniel Drayton, reprovingly answers: "No man can turn his back on human misery, Mother, no matter how much it tears the heart."

A "switchman" arrives with "one bale Kentucky black wool. Damaged in handling." Henry, the "damaged" slave from Kentucky

(his leg has been maimed), in telling of his perilous escape during which his family was separated, reveals that he is Lee Howard's uncle and adoptive father. In turn, the Draytons tell what they know of Lee Howard's story and how he found "freedom in death." Henry has just one request of the Draytons: that they take the little money he has saved and buy a stone. Henry wants Lee Howard to "know his folks ain't jes' walk off an' leave him alone."

Mr. Drayton is sympathetic, but mindful that their whole illegal abolitionist operation may be put into jeopardy, warns: "If we marked that grave it would be like raising a flag on our station." Mrs. Drayton, however, interprets Henry's visit as a sign and argues: "Don't we want the world to see the evil of this bondage? . . . If we put this poor child's story on his stone for all to see, perhaps we'll draw more people to our cause. Perhaps a slave catcher will read it and turn away, sickened and ashamed." As they compose the message to be inscribed by Henry, the stage lighting changes, and the audience sees both the 1853 Drayton household as though "arrested in time" and the original 1902 cemetery scene.

A few additional facts complete the story: the Draytons move in 1858, but Gramps returns with his wife "to live out our last days here in Oberlin." The play ends as the grandchildren make plans to bring flowers to the grave and spruce it up. Possessed by a few facts that enthralled her imagination, Ms. Flagg constructed a play that has the power to move us deeply.

Not only was Ann Flagg an acclaimed dramatist and a fine actress, she was also a beloved teacher. She had "a gift for reaching students no one else could; she could reach inside them," according to Joe Hill, Interim Chief Administrative Officer in the District 65 schools of Evanston, at the time of her death.(23) She was successful in reaching students because her attitude was unfailingly positive. Ann said that "youngsters who had 'the least to offer' had the most to gain—that's why she expended so much effort on them."(24)

When she wasn't writing plays, teaching was her life. Although she had a remarkable knack for spontaneous expression, she never left anything to chance: her daily lesson plans did not consist of a few phrases hastily slapped down; rather, she painstakingly spent her evenings writing out everything she wanted to cover in class. Her lesson plans reportedly filled entire notebooks.

She wanted so much to make the classroom a meaningful experience for her students. She once said:

You know, when I look over a class list for the very first time and begin to wonder about the boys and girls I'll be working with, I feel a sort of excitement begin to work inside of me. Really, I suppose it's a sense of adventure, because right here in our classroom we'll be exploring ideas and feelings and making discoveries about ourselves as individuals and discoveries about each other.(25)

Like all teachers, she also experienced her moments of exasperation, of course. On one occasion, when her students weren't putting enough energy into a play they were working on, she almost uttered an obscenity, but caught herself just in time saying, instead, "You children are acting like a group of frozen ass. . .ets."(26)

But, as a teacher, Ms. Flagg rarely resorted to sarcastic retorts. Rather, she used humorous parables to "discipline in a creative way."(27) Her former colleagues fondly refer to one such instructional story as "Talking Turtle," which Ms. Flagg had adapted from Aesop. In the tale, geese are flying south one day when they stop by a pond and meet a talkative turtle. The gabby turtle asks the geese if he may accompany them south. They agree, saying, "Well, we can put a string between our teeth and you can hang on but you'll have to keep quiet." After awhile they pass over some children who point up in the sky and shout, "Look! Look at that silly turtle up there flying along." The turtle becomes so incensed that he answers them back and smashes to the ground. This, admonished Ms. Flagg, is "what happens to talking turtles." Anytime a child interrupted her, instead of saying, "Be quiet," she would simply look at him and say, "talking turtle." All the children in the class picked up on this, and, whenever anyone interrupted, they would say, "talking turtle!" Ms. Flagg became famous for this and many other amusing stories.

In a well chosen figure of speech she once said, "I feel like an octopus: many hands on many kids."(28)

Expansive, imaginative, inventive, unique—such a woman was Ann Flagg: actress, playwright, teacher, humanitarian, and exemplary human being. Kind, thoughtful, even philosophical, she believed:

There are all sorts of wonderful rewards in this world that cost us nothing. We have only to become aware of them. We can't all find stones in the road and remove them for a pot of gold—but we can all be thoughtful and kind to each other. And the greatest reward of all is to feel good inside, knowing that we've done something worthwhile.(29)

Ann Flagg accomplished so many worthwhile things that, even a dozen years after her death, the secretary of the Theater Department at Northwestern was moved to say, in almost reverential tones, "She's still such a presence here!"(30) How could someone with "such vitality, such a sense of life"(31) ever really die? As her teacher at Garnet High, Ruth Norman, said of Ann: "To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die."(32) Not only will Ann Kathryn Flagg live on in the hearts of those who knew her, she will also live on because she left us the legacy of her art. In becoming more aware of her work, the rewards will be ours.



## ENDNOTES

1. Letter from Ruth Norman to Leonard J. Deutsch, 6 June 1983.
2. Telephone conversation with Lewis V. Barnes, 20 July 1983.
3. Ms. Flagg considered her preparation at West Virginia State College to be "splendid." See Sol Padlisky, "Of All Things," *Charleston Daily Mail*, 27 December 1963, p. 4.
4. From Ann Flagg's vita, "Summary of Education and Experience, 1960." (Hereafter referred to as "Vita.") Supplied by Dawn Murray.
5. Ibid.
6. Much of the preceding information is from a letter, 18 July 1983, written by Orval L. Price, Assistant Superintendent of Marion County Schools, and from Ms. Flagg's "Teacher's Permanent Record," also supplied by Mr. Price.
7. "Vita."
8. "Garnet Graduate Scores in Play," local newspaper notice that quotes from Spalth's review. n.d. Supplied from family scrapbook by Jo Ellen Flagg.
9. Rowena Jelliffe, "A Memorial Tribute in Honor of Ann Flagg," 8 November 1970, Martin Luther King Junior Lab School, Evanston, Illinois. Tape supplied by Gerry Bergmann. (Hereafter referred to as "Memorial Tribute.")
10. List of Karamu plays supplied by Dawn Murray; also interview with Jo Ellen Flagg, 27 May 1983.
11. "Vita."
12. Jelliffe, "Memorial Tribute."
13. Interview with Gerry Bergmann (Ann's Evanston roommate), 8 July 1983, Evanston, Illinois.
14. See "Teacher's Play on Integration Wins First Prize, Chosen for TV," *Jet*, 13 February 1964, pp.60-61. (Hereafter referred to as "Teacher's Play.")
15. See Bayard F. Ennis, "Return of the Native: Honor at Home Termed Eerie," *Charleston Daily Mail*, 30 April 1964.
16. Ibid.
17. Interview with Ann Thurman, 8 July, 1983. This information, including copy of program, was supplied by Ann Thurman, Flagg's friend and supervisor. Ms. Thurman headed Evanston Public School's (District 65) Creative Drama program.
18. I am indebted to Dawn Murray, long-time Evanston friend of Ms. Flagg and fellow graduate student, for supplying me with copies of *Blueboy to Holiday—Over* and *A Significant Statistic*. It is a measure of her devotion to the memory of Ann Flagg that Ms. Murray had maintained a file filled with



materials by and about her friend. For my copy of *Unto the Least of These*, I am indebted to Jo Ellen Flagg, Ann's aunt, of the Kanawha County Public Library.

19. I have not yet been able to track down a copy of this uncompleted play. To the best recollection of Jo Ellen Flagg, it deals with a woman who moves from Illinois to West Virginia.

20. "Teacher's Play."

21. "Story of the Play," *Great Gettin' Up Mornin'* (Samuel French, Inc., New York, 1964), p. 3.

22. See Ennis.

23. Interview with Joe Hill, 9 July 1983.

24. Joe Hill, "Our Lives Are Richer for Having Known You." From "A Memorial Tribute in Honor of Ann Flagg," 8 November 1970, Martin Luther King Junior Lab School, Evanston, Illinois. Tape supplied by Gerry Bergmann.

25. "A Memorial Tribute."

26. Bergmann Interview.

27. Thurman Interview.

28. Ibid.

29. "A Memorial Tribute."

30. Interview with Dawn Murray, 8 July 1983.

31. Ibid.

32. Letter from Ruth Norman, 6 June 1983.

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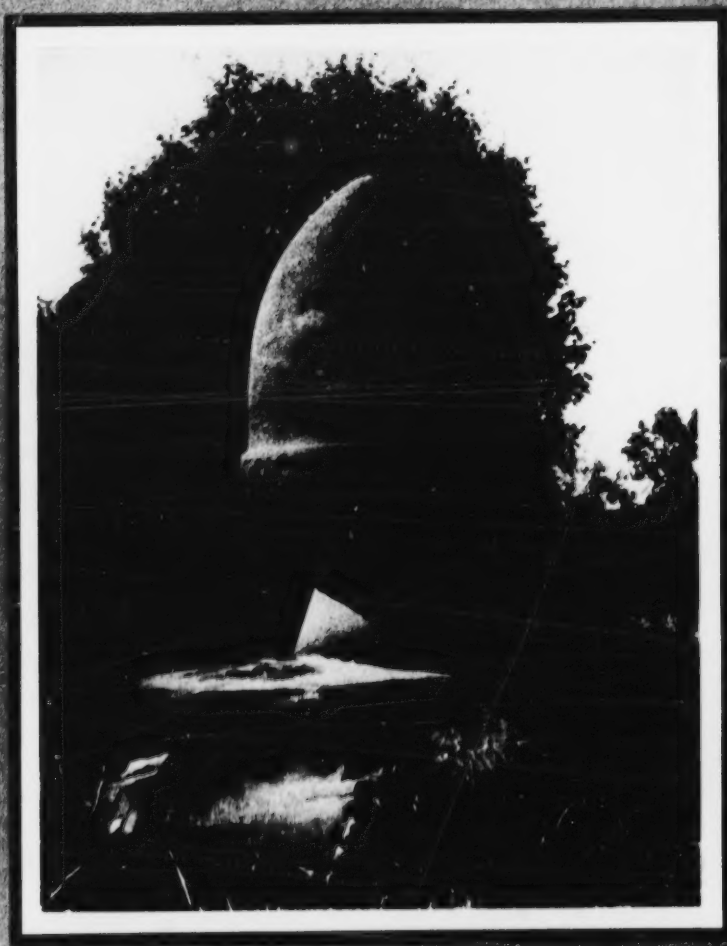
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# Rebecca Tendael Wood Littlepage

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1824-1896

by Dolly Sherwood with Joanne Hartman



*THIS is the story of Rebecca Tendael Wood Littlepage, whose life was cruelly disrupted by the Civil War. Widowed as the result of a duel, she was left alone to raise her children and to conserve the farm that was her livelihood.*

*This chapter is dedicated to Rebecca Putney Morgan, granddaughter of the first Rebecca, who tells the story vividly and has searched not only her memory, but her attic to find family documents and papers to assist in preparation of this paper.*

A giant acorn carved of sandstone is a curious monument. Seen in its place on a knoll in Spring Hill Cemetery, Charleston, West Virginia, it is a Victorian metaphor. Some departed family member, perhaps father or grandfather, was thought to have the strength of an oak.

But the sculpture marks the grave of a woman, Rebecca Tendael Wood Littlepage. It was she who possessed the qualities of fortitude and endurance symbolized by the great tree.

Inquiry into the life of Rebecca Littlepage bears out that the image is apt. During the course of her life, and particularly during the years of the Civil War, she faced calamity with courage. Called upon to take responsibilities not traditionally allotted to women, she showed herself to be capable, independent, and resourceful. She is a woman worth remembering.

Rebecca was born in March 1824, on the Upper Falls of Coal, a community on the Coal River in the western part of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Little is known about her parents, Dolly Madison Thomas and William Wood, except that they, or their forebearers, had come from eastern Virginia to establish a home many years before.<sup>(1)</sup> They were prosperous landowners who farmed, and they were recognized as the aristocracy of the area, a determination made on the basis of family heritage and property, rather than on money. While growing up, Rebecca was undoubtedly nurtured in a home that honored hard work and high ideals.

There were no schools in the vicinity for Rebecca and her brothers, "Knob", "Tip", and William, to attend. A contemporary named Mollie Hansford, who lived on Coal River, was sent to "the Licks"—meaning Malden—so that she could go to school.(2) But this meant boarding away from home, apart from the companionship of the family circle. So it is no wonder that William and Dolly Madison Wood chose to educate Rebecca at home. They must have been capable instructors, for, in later years, she instilled a love of learning and a desire for achievement in all seven of her own children.

When Rebecca Wood was about 20 years old, she met Adam Brown Dickinson Littlepage. He had come in 1840 from his home on Anthony's Creek in Greenbrier County. He settled around Kanawha Salines and went into the salt business, which was flourishing in the area. There, and in the surrounding lands, water was pumped from wells and drawn off the ground where there was thought to be a deposit of salt. Then laborers, often slaves, made fires of cut logs to burn off the brine, leaving the salt, which was dried on long tables.(3)

The two young people met at a Baptist Association meeting on the Coal River near what is now St. Albans. Rebecca was visiting her friend, Betty Wilson, and the camp meeting, which was to last several days, promised social diversion as well as religious inspiration. "You didn't have to be a Baptist to attend," Rebecca Putney Morgan, the granddaughter of the first Rebecca recalled. "It was just something to go to."(4)

"All the Littlepages had a flare," Mrs. Morgan said, and, indeed, Adam Littlepage must have seemed a suitable match for Rebecca. She was strong, intelligent, and spunky, with a mind of her own. These characteristics presumably appealed to Littlepage, for he asked if he might accompany her to her home at the Upper Falls of Coal. When the camp meeting was over, with permission granted, Adam set out to escort her to her family. The two were on horseback, and Rebecca challenged her new friend to a race, a contest that she won handily.(5) Apparently Adam Littlepage was not threatened by her victory, and the courtship flourished.

The two were married at the Upper Falls of Coal on February 8, 1845. The wedding must have been a social event of some importance, for the bride had three attendants, a considerable number for the time.(6)

An "elephant's breath" shawl, or mantle, that lies hidden in an old treasure trunk, is the only remnant of her wedding costume that survives. Although Rebecca Morgan pointed out that the story is not Littlepage legend or lore, she had heard that the silk for the shawl came from silkworms raised on the Wood family place. Mulberry trees that grew wild supplied the food for the exotic silkworms. From their product, the thread was spun and made into the fabric that fashioned the pinkish-taupe shawl with the peculiar name "elephant's breath."

In the first years of their marriage, Rebecca and Adam Littlepage lived at "the Licks," in a rented house, probably a log cabin, near

Brook's Furnace or Saltworks.(7) The cabin was located on the site of what is now Daniel Boone Park. There, attended only by a midwife or women neighbors, Rebecca gave birth to a daughter, Mary Lavinia, on November 19, 1845.(8) Within a year, another girl, Mary Elizabeth, was born. Both of these children died in infancy, a common incident in those times. One child is said to have succumbed to *cholera morbus*, also called sporadic cholera, a form of gastroenteritis. The two infants were buried in Charleston at the present location of Ruffner Park on Kanawha Boulevard, but whatever stones once marked these small graves were long ago removed and destroyed.(9)

Soon the young couple began to plan for a permanent home. The story of the acquisition of the Stone House on Kanawha Two-Mile Creek was told many years later by their daughter, Alberta Rebecca Littlepage Putney, the second Rebecca. "I do not think I have forgotten a word that my mother spoke regarding my father's purchase of the property," she wrote on July 8, 1936. It was through the "kindly interest and lifelong friendship of Esquire Samuel Rust who lived at Coal's Mouth (now St. Albans, Kanawha County) he learned about the sale of the Stone House at Kanawha Two-Mile," Mrs. Putney said. Samuel Rust rode to Malden on horseback, a distance of about 20 miles, to tell Adam Littlepage that the property would be for sale at auction at the Courthouse in Charleston.(10)

The bidding must have been lively, but the last and highest bidders were Adam Littlepage and Dr. Spicer Patrick, who owned the adjacent property. Adam Littlepage outbid Spicer Patrick by \$500, and, in 1848, Adam and Rebecca Littlepage moved to the Stone House, which was to be Rebecca's home for the rest of her life.

The Stone House had been built in 1845 by Harop L. Joy and J. Carson, whose names are inscribed on a stone high up in the gable of the roof. Sandstone quarried on the property, handsawn rather than chiseled, had been used in the construction. The weight of the stone may account for the house's location in bottom land, rather than on the bluffs where neighbors in the area west of the Elk were building.(11) Spacious and well-proportioned, the house was designed in simple Federal style. Large windows had pointed arches over them, but little other decoration. Reportedly, it took two years to build the Stone House.

Inside, an entrance hall extended through the house, allowing summer breezes to circulate. In the winter, the house was warmed by huge log fires in every room, a comfort made possible by the double chimneys on either side of the house. In the original plan, not altered until many years later, there were four rooms on each floor, two on either side of the hall. The third story was an attic, possibly used as a ballroom in later years. Cooking was done in an outbuilding, with the food being carried to the dining room in the main building.(12)

The previous owners were Major Robert H. Thornton and his wife, Lucy Jane, who was ill with tuberculosis. One of the provisions of the sale was that the Thorntons be allowed to stay in the house until

Mrs. Thornton was strong enough to make the trip back to her home in eastern Virginia, a journey made by carriage or stagecoach. Two rooms, therefore, were allotted by the Littlepages to the Thorntons. Rebecca Littlepage later told her daughter that she became "very much attached to Mrs. Thornton," who was "a tall, gentle, lovely Virginia lady." Rebecca herself was always "the picture of health, . . . had great energy, and enjoyed helping others." She did all that she could to make Lucy Jane Thornton comfortable and treated her with the greatest patience. In about three months, the Thorntons were able to make the trip across the mountains, but Lucy Jane Thornton died about a year later.(13)

Littlepage was an industrious man. Across the road from the house, he set up a cooperage complete with carpentry shops and a forge. Some of the laborers he used were slaves who were taught the cooperage trade and blacksmithing skills. Making barrels was both a profitable enterprise and a natural complement to the salt industry. The barrels, loaded with salt, were shipped down the river to Cincinnati, where they were sold. Littlepage also owned a general store.(14)

Soon after the family moved into the Stone House, Adam Littlepage began to acquire more land. He extended his holdings to include a farm on Tupper's Creek near Sissonville and another property, the Tyler farm, on Tyler Creek, "with fine timber on it and several hundred acres of land for grazing and farming."(15) One of the most interesting of his purchases was the additional parcel of land bought from his neighbor, Spicer Patrick, who seems to have harbored resentment at losing the Stone House to Littlepage. In 1851, the Littlepages bought "one acre and twelve poles," with Dr. Patrick reserving the right to remove some apple and peach trees in the proper season. According to the agreement, Adam Littlepage would make a "tight plank fence, six feet high, nailed next to his land, on the line between him and said Patrick . . ."(16)

Meanwhile, Rebecca Littlepage was the mother of a growing family. John William, the eldest surviving child, was born November 8, 1847, in the house at "the Licks." Five more children followed, a daughter and four sons, before the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. In a time when many children died in infancy, the Littlepages were fortunate to lose only two.

The prevention of illness, particularly among children, was a constant concern. Measles, diphtheria, and whooping cough were dreaded ailments. Even "summer complaint," a virulent form of diarrhea, could quickly kill an infant or older child. A strong believer in the curative powers of blackberry cordial for summer complaint and other disorders, Rebecca sent the boys in the family to pick the berries so that she could make the cordial.(17)

The farm yielded all of the foods needed to set a wholesome and sumptuous table. Corn, tomatoes, beans, pumpkins, and squash were some of the vegetables grown in the garden. The orchards, which



stretched from one side of the house to the creek, produced peaches and apples. Hams, turkey, biscuits, cakes, and cornbread were among the foods served from the kitchen, with its rows of iron pots and skillets.(18)

Sheep were raised on the farm primarily for their wool. Rebecca Littlepage had her own spinning wheel to spin thread and a loom on which she wove the thread into fabric. Much of the clothing for the household was made from this cloth.

Helping Rebecca with the spinning, weaving, and other household tasks was a slave girl named Celine, who had been given to Rebecca by her mother at the time of Rebecca's marriage to Adam Littlepage. Celine was then about 18 years old. She had lived with the young couple at the previous homesite and was a valuable house servant and nurse at the Stone House.

Unlike the rest of western Virginia, Kanawha County had a sizeable slave population. In 1850, there were more than 3,000 slaves compared with a free white population of 12,000.(19) But the selling of a family servant was repugnant even to slave-holders. When Adam Littlepage announced that he was going to sell Celine at the next opportunity, his wife pointed out to him that Celine was not his to dispose of. Littlepage, however, was not moved.

When Captain Jim Ficklen, who bought and sold slaves, tied up at Patrick's Landing, Rebecca took matters into her own hands. With the help of the other servants, who undoubtedly were terrified for Celine as well as for themselves, she hid the girl in the cornfield in a tepee of cornshucks. There Celine was kept secretly for about a week, sustained by food and water brought by the other slaves. Adam Littlepage was furious. When Captain Ficklen and his steamboat pulled away, Celine was safely brought forth.(20)

When the state of Virginia seceded from the Union and war became inevitable, opinion and loyalties were sharply divided in the Kanawha Valley. In the House of Delegates of the Restored Government, the western counties' response to Virginia's secession, Spicer Patrick and George Summers were moderate Whig members.(21) Like the Littlepages, many of the landed gentry were staunch supporters of the Southern cause. James Carr, whose frame house and farm called "Edgewood" gave its name to the whole section of land around it, sent his family to undisputedly Southern territory. Another major householder in the area, Holly Hunt, was presumably a Southern sympathizer.(22)

Since the Kanawha Valley was in Virginia, recruiting for the South was the natural course of events. Some militia groups, like the Kanawha Riflemen, organized in 1859 by George Smith Patton, already existed. Patton, a graduate of Virginia Military Institute, practiced law in Charleston. He had foreseen an internecine struggle in western Virginia. Patton's unit was mustered into the Confederate Army as the Twenty-Second Infantry, but its command post in the Kanawha Valley was not given to Patton. Instead, the top position went to Henry A.

Wise, former governor of Virginia, and one of those military figures described with derision as "political generals."(23)

It was Robert E. Lee, commander of all the forces in Virginia and a general of the Confederate Army, who sent Henry Wise to protect the Valley from any invasion that might come from Union forces in Ohio. Wise traveled down the Kanawha River by steamboat in an expedition that had the aspects of a triumphal procession. At Malden, women greeted the militia with waving flags and cheers. A bountiful supper was served before the party continued to Charleston where Wise established temporary headquarters in the Kanawha House, a hotel at the corner of Front Street—now Kanawha Boulevard—and Summers Street. A few days later, however, Wise moved to Camp Two-Mile, also known as Camp Lee, on the west side of Adam Littlepage's farm. There he built breastworks to defend his position against Union soldiers under General Jacob Cox, who were expected to arrive from the west.(24) Rebecca Littlepage's celebrated confrontation with General Henry A. Wise must have taken place at about this time, shortly before the engagement at Scary Creek on July 17, 1861.

The tyrannical, irascible Wise quickly made himself the object of hatred in the area, alienating even those who were loyal to the Confederacy. Adam Littlepage apparently attracted Wise's unwelcome attention as a rich landowner who was continuing to operate his cooorage business and his general store, a course that seemed best to him and was encouraged by his neighbors. According to an account in the *Philadelphia Times*, Wise thought that Littlepage should be serving in Wise's regiment in spite of the fact that he was 40 years old and the father of six children.(25)

General Wise looked upon Littlepage's stand as subterfuge. Berating him in rude language, he called Adam a "Yankee sympathizer who must be taught a lesson." Either he must join the Army, Wise demanded, or his property would be confiscated. In addition, General Wise announced that he intended to use the Stone House for his headquarters. "So you had better go home and get ready for me," Wise declared menacingly.(26)

The next morning, General Wise presented himself confidently at the front door of the Stone House, and "rapped with his sword hilt." It was Rebecca Littlepage who came to the door, a strategy probably decided upon by the Littlepages themselves.

I want this house for my headquarters," Wise demanded.

Rebecca, showing no visible sign whatever of trepidation, said firmly to Wise:

General Wise, my husband is powerless to resist your force, but this property is mine as much as his, and I shall under no circumstances allow you to enter it. Be good enough to leave the premises. Mr. Littlepage's mouth is closed and his hands are tied, but mine are not—yet.(27)

Adam Littlepage could be seen inside the house, and Wise taunted him. He, Henry A. Wise, was the master of *his* house, he said.

Littlepage had better remove Rebecca "without any further foolishness, if you are a man."

"I am as much the head of my family as you," Adam Littlepage is said to have replied, "but in this I yield to my wife's judgment."

Wise left with a threat to "blow the house down over your head," only to return sometime later with artillery to take up a position in front of the Stone House. A crowd of curious spectators had gathered to watch. As tent poles were put into the ground of the front lawn, Rebecca went around and kicked them out. As the guns were being wheeled into position, she gathered her children around her on the front stoop.

General Wise allegedly allowed her two minutes to remove herself and her children, an order she ignored. A subordinate officer reported back to the furious Wise:

She says that if you came here to make war on women and children, she and her little ones might as well fall as live dishonored.(28)

An enraged Wise gave the order to open fire, but the captain in charge refused, even though General Wise threatened to arrest him for insubordination. Presently Wise marched off, never to enter the Littlepage house during his brief tenure at Two-Mile.(29)

Although the Battle of Scary Creek was a Confederate victory, it was not decisive. Wise withdrew from Charleston on the night of July 24, 1861. His troops partially destroyed the bridge over the Elk River to delay the enemy. At Gauley, he joined General John B. Floyd, another "political general." Issac Noyes Smith, a Charleston soldier, reported in his journal that, of all the exigencies of the War that he thoroughly detested, nothing was more demoralizing than "the conflicting rivalries of General Wise and John B. Floyd." (30) Soon Wise was recalled by Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy.

When the Confederate troops left the Littlepage property, they apparently helped themselves to grain, horses, bacon, molasses, and sugar. Adam Littlepage, not disposed to deal with the Yankee troops who would follow, left with the Rebels, according to his daughter Rebecca Putney. Littlepage soon became the quartermaster officer of the Twenty-Second Infantry under George S. Patton's command.(31)

Leaving home, Littlepage took with him \$2,000 in gold, which he stowed away in saddlebags made by his wife. Traveling with him was his oldest son, John William, who was about 14 years old. The boy was supposed to attend a military school at Blue Sulphur Springs, but he soon ran away from there to join his father at Dublin Depot, Virginia.

Meanwhile, Rebecca awaited the birth of her seventh child. Her husband had asked that the baby not be named until he could come home on leave. On January 28, 1862, a girl was born. Apparently, this time the mother had the help of a doctor, for in later years, the child born on that day told her own offspring that "Dr. Cotton brought her." A letter came from Adam Littlepage, still encamped at Dublin. It

was "a pitiable thing," he wrote, "that a little girl should be born in such troublous times." He repeated his request that the child not be named until he could get home.(32)

Unfortunately, he was never to return home. An argument arose between him and a Lieutenant Brown over the ownership of a saddle that Adam had bought in Cincinnati. A challenge was issued and a duel fought with pistols. Each man was mortally wounded. Adam Littlepage died in April 1862, and was buried in a common grave in the Confederate Cemetery at Dublin, Virginia.(33)

Rebecca Littlepage was now a widow with seven children to care for. To be sure, she was not penniless. But, as the tides of war shifted, her situation became desperate. She needed all of her courage and ingenuity to survive.

Other troubles plagued Rebecca. Soldiers stationed at the site known as Fort Scammon on what is now Fort Hill began to fire on fortifications in the vicinity of the Littlepage house. Cannonballs rained on the yard, setting the shutters of the house on fire. To save the house itself, the older boys pulled the burning shutters away from the house.(34)

When Confederate troops left the Valley in 1861, their places were taken by Union soldiers under General Jacob B. Cox. During this period, in the fall of 1861, the Kanawha River reached a crest of nearly 47 feet. Rebecca Littlepage had to cope with the danger of rising water, and, it is said, steamboats came right up into her cornfields, inundated as they were in the low areas near the Kanawha and the Elk.(35)

During the years of the War, sentries and pickets of one army or the other were constantly present on Rebecca Littlepage's property. She learned to put aside her partisan feelings as she took hot soup or some other food to cold, lonely soldiers, whatever uniform they wore. While her basic instincts were humanitarian, she also had the common sense to recognize that it was better to have them as friends than as foes.(36)

Feeding the family was a continuing problem. What was not given to Yankee or Rebel was often taken by one or the other. The soldiers of the South had made off with a sizable store of provisions, and Union troops, it is said, burned all the outbuildings, including the fine barn, leaving only the Stone House to shelter the family. Not only was the family's farm virtually in ruins, but help from others was not to be counted on, since Rebecca's neighbors were in equally sad straits. The farm of John McClanahan, in the direction of Sissonville, however, was off the main road and not visible to marauding troops. One day, McClanahan arrived at the Stone House with a wagonload of provisions that would sustain Rebecca and her children for some time to come. Fruit, potatoes, cornmeal, and even hams were gratefully received, and the food was carefully hidden away. Adam Littlepage, the youngest boy, was boosted up the chimney openings to hang the hams where they weren't likely to be found. "Uncle John McClanahan,"

as the children were instructed to call him, had helped them when they most needed it.(37)

For a time in 1862, Union troops under the command of General Joseph Lightburn occupied Charleston and the surrounding area. Command headquarters were in the Ruffner house in what is now the 1500 block of Kanawha Boulevard. One day, Rebecca Littlepage, brought by a neighbor, appeared there. The troops of both armies had burned her fences to make sentry fires, she told Lightburn. With no boundaries or restraints, all of her cattle had wandered off or had been stolen, along with the horses. The only creature left to her was an old blind horse. But, one dark night, the animal had strayed within the area of surveillance. The sentry, hearing no answer to the question, "Who goes there?" fired on the unseen fugitive. Now Rebecca had no horse to take her to the mill where her meager supply of corn could be ground into meal.

General Lightburn listened and then reminded the woman before him that they were enemies. "You are a Southern sympathizer, and I am a general of the Union Army," he is reported to have said. "I have no right to help you." But he told Rebecca that his forces were moving out of the Valley. One of the few things left behind would be a sick horse, too weak to be useful to them or the enemy. She could have this horse, he said, if she thought it would help her.

Gratefully, Rebecca Littlepage took the animal and nursed it back to health. The horse was named "General Lightburn" and became a part of the family. "Little Beck," the youngest child, recalled riding the General's back to deliver the corn to Bibby's mill.(38)

At last, the War was over. Rebecca Littlepage was confronted with new and urgent problems. When a comrade, Thomas Broun, returned with Adam Littlepage's effects, Rebecca found that the \$2,000 he had taken with him had been converted to Confederate money. Rebecca desperately needed money. She had ridden her horse to Judge Summers' house at Glenwood to ask his advice, for taxes would have to be paid. He advised her to sell some of her property, and this she tried to do. The sheriff had already cautioned her that her property could be sold for delinquent taxes. The next official caller was a young deputy sheriff, "about 19 years of age." She immediately recognized George Wesley Atkinson whom she had known since he was a child.(39)

"Mrs. Littlepage," he said, "I have been sent to collect your taxes or sell some of your property to satisfy the claims."

"Wesley, this is hard," she reportedly responded. "I have failed to get the money to pay my taxes—I have tried—I think I can sell some timber soon to pay the taxes." (40) Her attempt to sell the land at Tupper's Creek had not been successful, she said. She begged for more time, pleading with Atkinson and vowing to do everything in her power to raise the necessary money.

Wesley Atkinson knew all of the circumstances that had brought her to this crisis: the death of Adam, the loss of the stock and all of

the crops and provisions, the burning of the barns, the store, the granaries, houses, and sheps. He had seen and understood the devastation of the War. Rising from his chair, Atkinson said, "I am sorry to have added anything to your distress, and if your property is ever sold, someone else will sell it—I will not."(41)

In later years, George Wesley Atkinson, a Republican, would become the tenth governor of West Virginia. He also became a judge. The Littlepage sons, although raised in a traditionally Democratic family, were always instructed by their mother, who, like all women, had no franchise, to vote for George Wesley Atkinson.(42)

Gradually, conditions improved for Rebecca and her neighbors. While she sold some of her land, she continued to have extensive holdings. One of the essential factors for recovery was the restocking of the farm. Perhaps it was in this effort that she made the acquaintance of George Bennett, who picked up cattle in Ohio and drove them to North Carolina. Whether Rebecca procured any cattle from him is not clear, but he stayed at the Stone House when he came through Charleston. Soon he was stopping for a more compelling reason, for he courted and married Mary Frances Littlepage, Rebecca's older daughter.(43)

In the years after the War, the Littlepage children, like others of the aristocratic landowner class, were taught by a governess who lived in the house. Miss Ettie Walker came from New England to West Virginia with the zeal of a missionary bent on enlightening the adults as well as the children in her classroom. Apparently, Miss Ettie and Mrs. Littlepage had a few clashes of personality. They seem to have come to terms with each other, however, for Miss Ettie stayed with the family for some time. Of the governesses who came to the area, some married and remained; others, including Miss Ettie Walker, entered the growing school system as principals or teachers.(44)

When "Little Beck" was ten or twelve and still not officially named, she and her older sister Mary Frances went out into the yard around the Stone House to talk about a name for her. They sat on a stone known to them as "Watermelon Rock," a flat, sloping place where it was easy to slice a ripe, juicy melon. "Alberta Rebecca Littlepage" was their choice for her name, but she continued to be called "Little Beck" or "Birdie." She was the second Rebecca. Four succeeding generations have borne the name.

The Stone House, a place where many notables were entertained with gracious hospitality, came to be known as "the Stone Mansion." (45) But Rebecca, the matriarch, remained unpretentious, for she remembered the hard lessons of the Civil War and the importance of frugality.

Her seven children grew up to distinguish themselves in a variety of occupations. John William was a steamboat captain on the Mississippi. Charles Frazier, an engineer, constructed dams on the Kanawha River and helped to build the Revolutionary War monument at Yorktown, Virginia. After attending medical school in Cincinnati,



Alexander Bonaparte Littlepage became a doctor. Samuel Dickinson Littlepage, lawyer and judge, studied at Washington and Lee. Adam Brown Littlepage, a congressman from his home state of West Virginia, went west in his youth to live with his uncle "Knob" Wood in Indiana. In the town of Newport, Indiana, he read law with Judge Jump. Mary Frances, who married the cattleman George Bennett, died at an early age. "Little Beck," the second Rebecca, married Alexander Moseley Putney and became the mother and grandmother of a loving family. She was recognized as a talented artist and an able administrator of her own business affairs.(46)

An inscription is written in the Littlepage family Bible:

Our mother Mrs. Rebecca Tendael Wood Littlepage died at her house, "The Old Stone Mansion," of pneumonia, 1896—February 29.

Later the acorn sculpture was erected, carved from the same quarry stone as the Littlepage house. Old-fashioned and allegorical, the unusual marker evokes the memory of this strong-willed, independent woman. She was the first Rebecca.

## ENDNOTES

1. Taped interview with Rebecca Putney Morgan, 17 July 1983. Subsequent references will be abbreviated: RPM 83. The names William Wood and Dolly Madison Thomas Wood are also mentioned in a manuscript by Alberta Rebecca Littlepage Putney, 8-9 July 1936, hereafter called Putney Papers.

2. William Wintz, ed., *Recollections and Reflections of Mollie Hansford 1828 - 1900 (A Daughter of the Kanawha Valley)* (Charleston, WV: Quick Copy Services, n.d.).

3. Taped interview with Rebecca Putney Morgan, 15 February 1972, hereafter abbreviated RPM 72. See also Ruth Woods Dayton, *Pioneers and Their Homes on Upper Kanawha* (Charleston, WV: West Virginia Publishing Co., 1947), p. 128.

4. RPM 83.

5. Ibid.

6. Julia Wintz, comp., *Kanawha County Marriages: January 1, 1792 to December 31, 1869* (Parsons, WV: McClain Printing Co., 1975), p. 52; information on bridesmaids from Rebecca Putney Morgan.

7. Putney Papers.

8. Littlepage Family Bible; also RPM 83.

9. RPM 83.



10. Putney Papers.
11. The Stone House is currently the administration building for the Housing Authority of the City of Charleston. A photograph in the family collection of Rebecca Putney Morgan (Mrs. John Morgan) shows the stone. References to the builders are also in the Putney Papers. Dayton, p. 265, speculates about the weight of the stone and the location of the house in the bottomland.
12. RPM 83; Putney Papers.
13. Putney Papers.
14. RPM 72.
15. Putney Papers.
16. Snodgrass, Jean. "The Old Stone Mansion, 1845-1861." Unpublished paper, written at Morris Harvey College, Charleston, WV, 1971.
17. RPM 72.
18. Putney Papers; RPM 72.
19. RPM 72; Census figures from Archives Division, West Virginia Department of Culture and History, Capitol Complex, Charleston, WV, show only 212 free non-whites.
20. RPM 72.
21. Otis K. Rice, *Charleston and the Kanawha Valley: An Illustrated History*. (Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1981), p. 37.
22. RPM 83.
23. "Captain George S. Patton and the Kanawha Riflemen," in Terry Lowry, *The Battle of Scary Creek: Military Operations in the Kanawha Valley April-July, 1861* (Charleston: Pictorial Histories Publishing Co., 1982), pp. 4-9. See also Boyd B. Stutler, *West Virginia in the Civil War*, 2nd edition (Charleston, WV: Education Foundation, Inc., 1966), p. 49 ff.
24. Lowry, *The Battle of Scary Creek*, pp. 62-64.
25. "War Times On the Kanawha," an unsigned article in *The Philadelphia Times*, dated in handwriting "1886," Archives and Manuscripts Section, West Virginia Collection, West Virginia University, from the Roy Bird Cook Collection, Box 9, Vol. 2, p. 443 (renumbered). Rebecca Littlepage Putney refers to the account of her mother's confrontation with General Wise as having been written by Captain John Swann in *The Philadelphia Times* "about 1870." Whether these accounts are the same is not clear. Lowry cites "True Story of the Wise-Littlepage Affair," an unidentified newspaper clipping, West Virginia State Archives Collection, which states that, according to Charles Littlepage, no force was used. The *Times* story is the one told almost verbatim by Rebecca Putney Morgan in 1972.
26. *Philadelphia Times*, as in note 25.
27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. William C. Childers, ed., "A Virginian's Dilemma or The Civil War Diary of Issac Noyes Smith in Which He Describes the Activities of the 22nd Regiment of Virginia Volunteers, September to November 1861," *West Virginia History Quarterly*, 27 (April 1965), No. 3, pp. 173-200.

31. Application for membership in Daughters of the Confederacy in West Virginia for Alberta Rebecca Littlepage Putney, 1898. Family papers of Rebecca Putney Morgan, Charleston, WV.

32. RPM 72.

33. Ibid.

34. RPM 83; the bombardment is believed to have come from Union forces stationed at Fort Scammon (Fort Hill). Otis Rice (p. 46) describes the building of Fort Scammon in 1863 with two future presidents of the United States involved in the building, Rutherford B. Hayes and William McKinley. It is also possible that the bombardment could have come from Confederate soldiers, September 13, 1862, when an advance guard under Brig. Gen. William Loring fired heavy artillery from Fort Hill (in Rice, p. 44). Extant cannonballs from the incident are owned by Rebecca Putney Morgan.

35. RPM 83. See also Rice, p. 43.

36. RPM 72; RPM 83.

37. Ibid.

38. RPM 72; for General Lightburn, see also Rice, pp. 44-45; Stutler, p. 227. When Lightburn and his troops left the Valley, they burned any provisions or ammunition that might help the enemy. This may have been the reason for the burning of the Littlepage barn, if indeed it happened at that juncture. George Summers, *Pages From The Past* (Charleston: *Charleston Journal*, 1935), states that Union forces under General Lightburn had a half million dollars of government stores in federal warehouses located in an area between Virginia and Quarrier Streets and Capitol and Hale. These they destroyed by fire rather than leave to the enemy (pp. 60-61).

39. Putney Papers; RPM 72, 83.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. RPM 83.

44. RPM 72.

45. The Stone Mansion, located at 1809 Washington Street West, was listed in 1982 on the National Register of Historic Houses.

46. RPM 83; also in family Bible and records.

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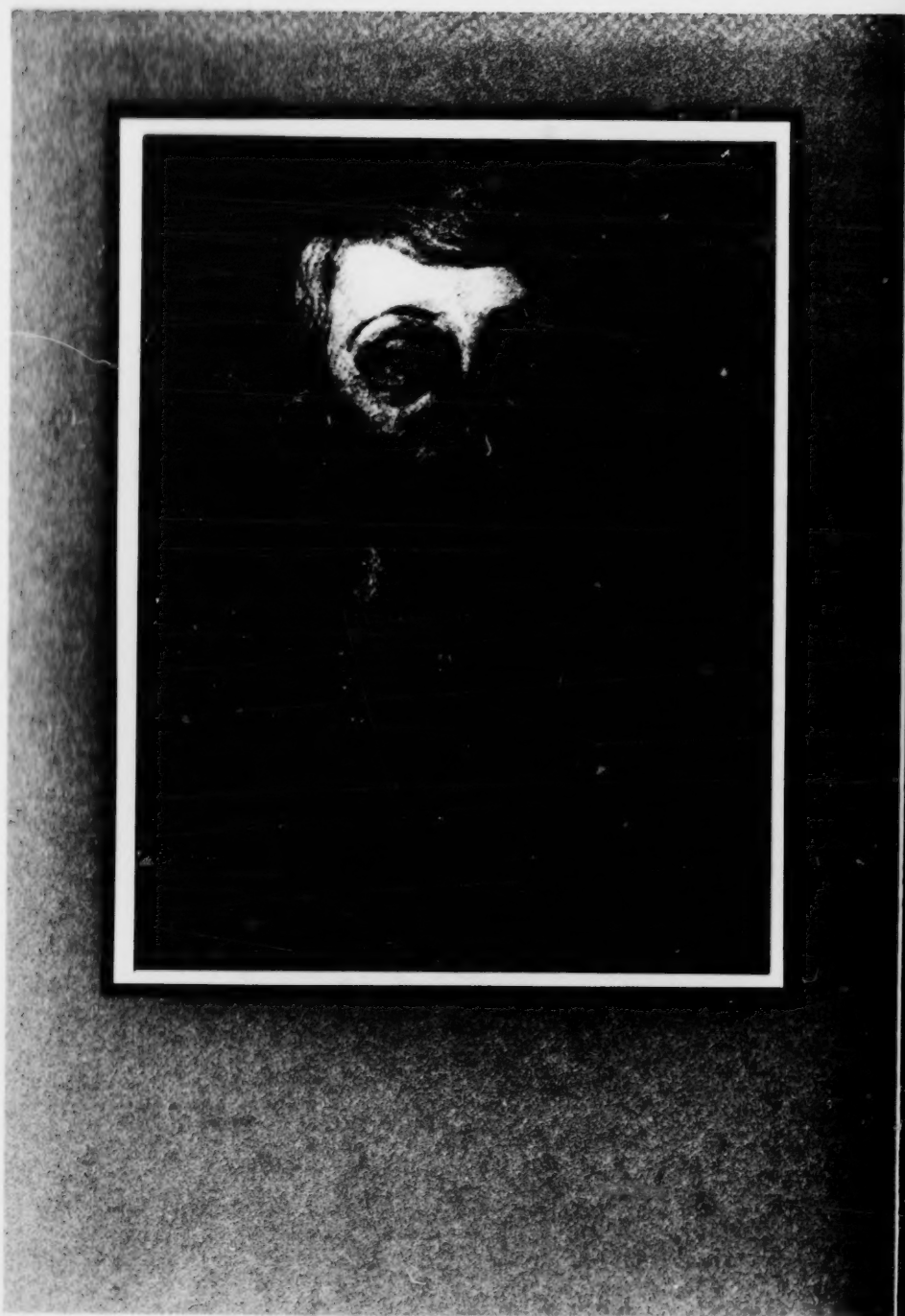
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# Agnes Greer

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1880-1972

by Sandra Law Metheney



*RESEARCH* into the lives of women often raises new and difficult questions. How do we evaluate the contributions of each partner in a business? What criteria are used to determine the influence of each partner, when the partners are husband and wife? In earlier decades, these questions probably would not have been asked. The wife's achievements and biography would have been concealed beneath her husband's. Only when historians focus close attention on such business relationships can they discover the contributions of women.

It is in this context that we can see the stature of Agnes Jane Reeves Greer. In a period when men dominated the business scene, she made her mark as a businesswoman, inventor, and investor. Educated for the business world by her father, she pursued and achieved financial success with her husband during his lifetime and, on her own, after his death. Her biography adds an important chapter to the record of achievements of women in West Virginia.

When she died at her Morgantown home on October 21, 1972, Agnes Jane Reeves Greer was 92 years old, and the active head of several companies. She was chairwoman of the board of Greer Steel Company of Dover, Ohio; president of Dover Broadcasting Company, which operated WJER; president of the West Virginia Newspaper Publishing Company; the Wetzel Publishing Company; WKJF, Inc., of Pittsburgh; Buckeye Construction Company; and Preston County Coal and Coke.<sup>(1)</sup>

During a period when women's roles were generally limited to social and domestic responsibilities, Agnes Greer had become one of the most successful businesswomen in America.<sup>(2)</sup> She is extraordinary in West Virginia's history, but little published information about her life, her contributions, and her accomplishments is available. Her biography generally is included under her husband's name. Yet Agnes Greer played as great a role, if not a greater one, than did her

husband, Herbert, in bringing industrial and communications development to the Morgantown area and to the state. Her money was used to build the companies; her business instincts were followed in purchasing them; and she took over leadership of the businesses, and acquired new ones after her husband's death.(3)

Reports filed with the Federal Communications Commission in the early 1960s state that Agnes had ownership interests in, and held official positions in, the West Virginia Radio Corporation (which owned WAJR and WKJF), Preston County Coke Company at Cascade, and the Cascade Corporation. It also indicated that the Dover Broadcasting Company owned WCNS of Canton, Ohio.

She owned 50.48% of the stock in West Virginia Radio Corporation while the West Virginia Newspaper Publishing Company owned the remainder. She operated WKJF as a sole proprietorship from 1948 until the broadcast license was transferred to the station. She owned 99% of the Dover Broadcasting Company stock and 76.5% of the stock in West Virginia Newspaper Publishing Company, which published two Morgantown daily newspapers. She owned 100% stock in the *Wetzel Republican*, a New Martinsville weekly, as well as the radio stock. She also owned 96.7% of the stock of Greer Steel, which produced cold rolled strip steel at plants in Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan and mined and processed limestone at plants at Greer and Riverton, West Virginia. She also owned 100% stock in the coke company, which was engaged in the generation and sale of electricity, with a generating plant at Cascade. She owned 100% stock in both a coal and coke company in Preston County and in the Cascade Corporation, which owned real and personal property and mineral interests in Monongalia and Preston counties. The report shows that she acquired the controlling interests of Greer Steel Company, the coke company, and WKJF in 1948, the year Herbert died. The Morgantown radio and newspaper stock was acquired earlier, and the rest was acquired in 1950 and 1959. She was president and director of all except the Cascade operations, where she was vice president and director.(4)

This financially successful woman, private and retiring in nature, was compelled, not by tradition, but by a strong determination to follow in her father's footsteps, to succeed in her business ventures, and to do things her way. Born in 1880 to Jeremiah E. and Jane Rees Reeves of Dover, Ohio, she was one of four children. Jeremiah, considered "the most prominent citizen of Dover," had made his fortune in rolling mills, iron and steel factories, banking, and real estate. He also owned a streetcar line.(5)

The Reeves-Greer legacy in Dover is imprinted on its economy and its landscape. The J. E. Reeves Museum (Agnes's childhood home) was donated by Greer Steel Company to the Dover Historical Society, which has restored the home and opened it to the public. The Reeves Foundation, the Reeves Bank Building, and Reeves Avenue, all memorialize the industrious family and are reminders of Agnes's heritage.

Jeremiah Reeves died "several times a millionaire," and left his estate to his wife. His will stated that if she pre-deceased him, his estate would be divided, with one-fourth going to each of his three daughters, and one-twelfth going to each of the children of his son Sam, who had died earlier. While all three daughters eventually received an equal share of the family empire and all received early instruction in business matters, only Agnes devoted her money and energy to continue the management and expansion of businesses.(6)

Agnes got her spark from Mr. Reeves, says R.A. (Dyke) Raese, retired executive vice-president of Greer Steel in Morgantown and her former son-in-law. "Because of her father's love and devotion, she became a go-getter. He instilled in her the belief that she could do anything. He had complete confidence in her, and he probably encouraged her." The love of business, which he passed on to her, became the "basic motivation throughout her life," he adds.(7)

Her business knowledge was ingrained when she and the other children were instructed when she was a child by a bookkeeper from the nearby steel plant. "There is no question he had a big influence on her. I think he knew they would have some wealth and he wanted them to know how to handle it," explains Paul Linsley, vice president of the West Virginia Newspaper Publishing Company and accountant for the Greer companies for many years.(8)

Her business career began with her employment as an assistant cashier in her father's bank. Her early education was obtained at Harcourt Seminary in Gambia, Ohio, and she received her formal education in business at National Park Junior College in Forest Glen, Maryland.(9)

It was said that Mr. Reeves spent most of his spare moments discussing, reading, or planning some business matter.(10) Almost the same words are used today in an acquaintance's recollections of Agnes Greer. Walter Zimmerman of Dover, a Greer Steel employee for 44 years, remembers that "when one visited in Mrs. Greer's home, the conversation was all business, from breakfast to dinner."(11)

Her marriage in 1908, at the age of 28, to Herbert C. Greer was the beginning of a partnership that was as important in business as it was in any emotional or personal sphere. Agnes Greer became an active partner with her husband in many industrial and business enterprises soon after they came to Morgantown as newlyweds.(12)

Born in Sharon, Pennsylvania, on August 11, 1877, Herbert was the son of Charles and Mary Park Greer. He was educated at Kiskiminitas (Saltsburg, Pennsylvania), and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston. Like the Reeves family in Ohio, the Greer family was prominently identified with the steel industry in western Pennsylvania.(13) Herbert had begun his West Virginia coal and coke business at the turn of the century with the Preston County Coke Company, later to become Preston County Coal and Coke Company, located in the Decker's Creek valley near Masontown.(14) A plant to provide power for its operations was built, and the Greers sold



excess power to the residents of the area. Agnes Greer founded this utility company, the Preston County Light and Power Company, in 1911.(15) According to Linsley, the couple also operated deep mines in the Bull Run area of Masontown until the late 1950s.

The financial success of these ventures provided money for further investments, and each additional venture proved as successful as preceding ones because of the "couple's business talent and know-how."(16) In 1912, Herbert Greer became president of Reeves Steel and Manufacturing Company, which had been founded by Agnes's brother Samuel in Dover, Ohio. This later became the Empire-Detroit Steel Division of Cyclops Corporation.

In 1914, Greer Limestone Company was established at a plant about seven miles east of Morgantown along the M & K Railroad. The Greenbrier limestone quarried along Decker's Creek was used extensively in the construction business, especially highway building, in the area. A small town, later named Greer, grew up around the quarry and the plant.(17) Greer-owned company towns were also established at Bretz and Cascade in the Masontown area.

In 1917, the couple founded Greer Steel Company and built a large plant at Dover to produce hot rolled steel. A second plant, built in 1936 in Anderson, Indiana, provided parts for General Motors until its closure in the 1950s. Both plants contributed to the war effort in the United States during World War II.(18)

Some people who knew her may have assumed that she was simply a figure-head in the companies, but Agnes was not only active in their operations, she was also their strength.(19) She knew financial trends, and she believed in reinvesting profits into their businesses.(20) She had a "tremendous interest in everything," states Dyke Raese. "If it could make money, she was interested in it," adds her grandson, John Raese.(21)

In the 1920s, the Greers began investing in newspapers and radio stations. In 1923, the couple bought the *Morgantown Post*, and subsequently, they purchased the *Morgantown Dominion News* and weekly newspapers at Mannington, Martinsburg, Grafton, and New Martinsville, West Virginia.(22) Until his death in 1948, Herbert Greer was publisher of the *Morgantown* newspaper, but from the beginning of their ownership, Agnes took an active interest in the newspaper, making decisions and seeing that things got done.(23) She was well-prepared to succeed her husband as publisher.

In 1939, she established Morgantown's first radio station, WAJR, which has her initials as its last three call letters. Later, she formed WJER, which bears her father's initials; the Elkins and Canton stations; and WKJF, Pittsburgh's first FM station and the present-day home of television Channel 53.

This new interest in communications did not distract her from other business interests. In fact, Agnes added to the Greer holdings. She drilled two productive gas wells in Morgantown, one near the old newspaper office building on Spruce Street and another near Seneca

Glass Company.(24) In the 1950s, when she was searching for a limestone deposit with low silica content to meet federal requirements for its use as rock dust in coal mines, she acquired Germany Valley Limestone Company in Pendleton County. According to Dyke Raese, the company produces some of the finest low silica limestone in the country to be used in mining, agriculture, and by the state's glass, steel, and paper industries. The company also produces hydrated lime for water purification plants.

Agnes was an inventive woman and at least 18 patents were issued in her name.(25) When her Anderson plant needed a pickler to heat its large hot rolled steel, she designed, and had patented, a machine that could treat the massive sheets of steel while they were rolling and unrolling. Called the Reeves Pickler, it was bought and used by other companies until it became obsolete. She said the idea for the pickler was conceived while she was sitting in the bathtub twisting and untwisting a washcloth.(26) She also designed a car with no rear doors and a soft carriage-type convertible top so that she could get in and out of it easily. John Raese remembers that it was custom-made for the Greers by Packard.

Agnes Greer's willingness to gamble contributed not only to her success in business ventures, but also led her to play the stock markets. "She loved to play the market, and she was very successful at it," states Dyke Raese. She also liked to play the slot machines in Palm Beach, Florida, especially at the exclusive and renowned Bradley's Club. In most of her social habits though, she was very formal and rigid.

Herbert and Agnes must have balanced each other, for he was self-satisfied, cautious, and "tight-fisted" with money. She, on the other hand, was "street smart" and ambitious.(27) Zimmerman notes that she had "prodigious intelligence. She was energetic, passionate, and ambitious. She would have made good in any career. I think she was 50 years ahead of liberation." In fact, it is doubtful whether she ever thought of herself in terms of women's rights. Agnes was doing what she loved, and she had the financial power to command respect. She had little reason to feel inadequate or deprived as a woman.

Agnes Greer was "far ahead of her time as far as women are concerned," acknowledges Dyke Raese. "I don't know any other woman with the kind of business sense she possessed. I don't think she ever gave a man a chance to patronize her. When she gave an order, it had better be done." She often reprimanded in the form of a letter, he notes. Linsley shares that view. "You could disagree with her and didn't have to worry about displeasing her, but if you did anger her, she could write a mean letter." Raese admired her leadership style:

She listened to what was presented. She would fish for answers, but she wouldn't tell you what she thought. You were usually in doubt about what you were doing for her. When she had made her decision about a matter, she would come to you with a simple "yes" or "no". When she held a board of directors meeting, other people were there, but she made the final decisions.

In spite of the power and control she exercised, Agnes Greer was a "frustrated business woman." Linsley recalls that she sometimes would express her feelings to him about not being able to go into the mills or the plants. She was "down-to-earth" and could relate well to her workers, but she was very reserved and concerned about propriety. So, while she was comfortable in the safety of a board room, she was fearful of what people would say if she stepped into the realm of working men. According to Linsley, "she hired managers she knew she could have confidence in to do what she couldn't do on the site."

Along with her reserve, she also possessed a "great sense of humor" that surfaced on occasion when she was doing business. As Linsley recalls, "if she caught someone in a bad position, she enjoyed it. She would tease them, let them dig themselves into a hole, and in the end, they usually felt like damned fools." The first time he met her was in her "huge office" in the old newspaper building. "She asked me if I thought I would mind working for an old woman. I said, 'I don't think 77 is very old,' and she responded, 'How do you know my age?'" When he explained that he had gotten information about her companies from a Dun and Bradstreet report, her interest turned to seeing the report for herself and "the ice was broken. We talked frankly and had an enjoyable meeting." In the years that followed, Linsley found the management of Greer finances "very fascinating." Agnes Greer's philosophy of life reflected her business orientation. She always told Zimmerman that "you have to weigh acquaintances in real depths and you can't take them for outward appearances." He recalls that "she didn't believe anybody until she was convinced, and she never let anybody get under her skin." Linsley says her philosophy was to "make money through hard work, ingenuity, and originality." Her grandson, Richard Raese, remembers a little plaque on her desk which might have been her motto: "The world owes you a living, but you have to work hard to collect it." Reflecting on the time he spent with his grandmother, Richard recalls her principles and character:

She was very proper, and she was very intelligent, and you gained from the experience of having been with her. Our conversations left me with the knowledge that she was very principled about right and wrong. She was forthright and honest and very enjoyable to be with. I had a lot of respect for her. She was somebody with principles and strength of character, and that's the reason I think she was so successful in business. When she made a position, she stuck to it.(28)

These qualities not only made her an astute businesswoman, but they also showed up in her personal relationships. They may explain why she put herself through years of legal battles with her daughter Jane over Jane's right to the family businesses and properties. The Greers' only child, Jane, was born in 1918 in Baltimore when Agnes was 38. It appears that she loved her daughter very much, but came to disagree with her after her divorce from Raese. Although Jane was

provided for financially all her life, Agnes relinquished to her only the controlling interest in the light and power company in Masontown.(29)

During the mid-1920s, the Greers lived in Pittsburgh, where they could be close to the steel industry, but when Jane developed allergies, their physician advised them to leave the polluted city.(30) They sold their Pittsburgh home and returned to Morgantown, where the air quality was better. They rented and owned homes on Grand and Spruce streets until they built the sprawling mansion overlooking Cheat Lake, which Agnes designed in 1929. The mansion, now empty, was constructed with fieldstone from the property, known as the Holland Farm. The house included a ballroom and an elevator, and was designed for formal living, but it was rarely used for entertaining. Constructed on the grounds were facilities for servants, garages for Herbert's many cars, and a one-room school for Jane.(31) The Greers also maintained homes in Palm Beach, Florida, and Dover, but the Morgantown mansion was their principal residence.

Agnes Greer had a love of quality, and of expanse or spaciousness, as demonstrated by the mansion, her office, and her personal appearance. Her nephew, T. R. Scheffer of Dover and DelRay, Florida, recalls that "she was immaculate and well-groomed. She looked like a lady."(32)

Her love affair with business left her little time for social affairs, but she belonged to numerous civic and social organizations in Palm Beach, Dover, Pittsburgh, and Morgantown. She was a Moravian by faith, as was the Reeves family.

She loved to travel, especially to Wales, her ancestral home.(33) She traveled to the Orient and Europe, and, on June 11, 1931, she was presented to King George V and Queen Mary at the Court of St. James in London. She was selected for this honor by Ambassador Charles G. Dawes, along with 32 other American women. She was accompanied by Herbert and Jane, as well as T.R. Scheffer. The entourage then traveled to Rome, where they had an audience with Pope Pius XI.(34)

Because her pleasure came from excelling in the business world, her biggest contribution to the community was in that area. Business was all that interested her, and probably for that reason, she enjoyed the company and conversation of men more than that of women. She did, however, have a number of important women acquaintances, including Eleanor Roosevelt.(35)

Unlike many women of her time, she thought of herself as Agnes Greer, not Mrs. H. C. Greer. "She was her own person," says Dyke Raese. Because of her individuality and aloofness, she was considered eccentric, especially in her later years.(36) Raese and Zimmerman relate that after the evening meal, she would excuse herself and retire to her study to spend hours doing paperwork. "I think she was shy. She was very quiet, but her letters were very expressive." Raese explains.

She was also proud. Much of her ambition stemmed from her belief that "it was a reflection on her if she had to close a business

down. She would maintain a business at a tremendous loss to keep it going." (37) With that pride came her dignity and aloofness. "But, when she was one-on-one with you in her office, she was as warm and nice as she could be, and she immediately put you at ease," states Linsley.

When Agnes Greer died in 1972 she left an estate appraised at \$3 million and a \$7 million trust fund. (38) She left controlling interests of most of her businesses and real estate in trust to her grandsons, Richard, John, and David, the children of Jane and R.A. Raese. Most of her stocks were liquidated to pay real estate taxes. (39) According to an article in the November 11, 1972 edition of the *Dominion News*, her estate consisted of two trust funds to be administered by Union National Bank of Clarksburg on behalf of each grandson. One trust, the Agnes J. Reeves Greer Trust, was established in a codicil drawn up in June 1970, and had as its assets 2,910 shares of Greer Steel common stock and 776 shares of West Virginia Newspaper Publishing Company common stock. The second trust included the remainder of her stock and properties, except her jewelry, household items, cars, and clothing, which were divided among the grandsons. The trusts were set up so that the grandsons received various amounts at ages 21, 25, 30, and 35. The main trust also contained a provision that the executors could, at their discretion, pay Jane Greer Kelly "any sum they deemed reasonable or necessary" for her support.

In an editorial tribute appearing in the *Dominion News* two days after her death, Agnes Greer was memorialized as "a person of the highest and loftiest professional principles and ethics . . . who continually acted in a manner to instill and bolster those traits in those who have worked for her down through the years." After observing that "fairness and accuracy were absolute musts with Mrs. Greer," the writer concluded, "Our leader is gone, but she has left behind a legacy of principle and performance which is timeless in its application to contemporary affairs." (40)

Agnes Greer's father was once described as "a true type of the businessman who works for the love of doing." His business life, it was said, was "a model example in all those essential elements of success, and is well worth the emulation of all aspiring young men who would lay the foundation for a successful and honorable business career." (41) So it was with his daughter Agnes, whose life is a model for all the aspiring young people who would likewise lay the foundation for business success.

## ENDNOTES

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2. Earl L. Core, *The Monongalia Story*, (Parsons, WV: McClain Printing Co., 1984) p. 497; and Jim Comstock, *West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, (Richwood, WV, 1976), 10:2051.
3. Interview with Richard A. (Dyke) Raese, retired vice president, Greer Limestone, Morgantown, WV, 30 January, 1985; and Comstock *Heritage Encyclopedia*, 10:2051.
4. Report to the Federal Communications Commission (copy) from Greer company records located at Greer offices, Morgantown, WV.
5. Obituary of Jeremiah Reeves, *The Daily Reporter* (Dover, Ohio), 2 July 1920.
6. *Daily Reporter*, 12 July 1920; and interview with Tom Conwell, director, Reeves Museum and the Dover Historical Society, Dover, Ohio, 16 February 1985.
7. R. A. Raese interview.
8. Interview with Paul Linsley, vice-president, West Virginia Newspaper Publishing Company, Morgantown, WV, 25 February 1985.
9. *Morgantown Post*, 24 March 1964.
10. *The Daily Reporter*, 2 July 1920.
11. Interview with Walter Zimmerman, retired president, Greer Steel, and present director, Reeves Foundation, Dover, Ohio, 16 February 1985.
12. *The Daily Reporter*, 2 July 1920.
13. Don Comley paper, "The Memoirs of Herbert Chester Greer," 29 April 1981, chapter I, p. I. (Typewritten.)
14. *Ibid.*
15. R. A. Raese Interview.
16. Core, p. 209.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Comley, chapter I, p. I.
19. R. A. Raese and Zimmerman Interviews.
20. R. A. Raese Interview; *Morgantown Post*, 24 March 1964.
21. Interview with John Raese, Morgantown, WV, 25 February 1985.
22. *Morgantown Post*, 24 March 1964.
23. *Ibid.*

24. R.A. Raese and Zimmerman Interviews.
25. Metal plate removed from company equipment bears 18 U.S. Patent numbers in Agnes Greer's name. Presently kept in office of John Raese, Greer Building.
26. R.A. Raese, Zimmerman, and John Raese Interviews.
27. R.A. Raese Interview.
28. Interview with Richard Raese, Morgantown, WV, 25 February 1985.
29. R.A. Raese and Paul Linsley Interviews.
30. Comley, chapter 6, p. 1.
31. R.A. Raese Interview.
32. Interview with Tom Scheffer, nephew of Agnes Greer, by telephone, 25 February 1985.
33. Ibid.
34. Core, p. 56; Comley, chapter 6, p. 2.
35. John Raese Interview.
36. Zimmerman Interview.
37. R.A. Raese Interview.
38. *Mountain Journal* (Morgantown), November 1975; according to *Dominion News* (Morgantown), 11 November 1972, much of the estate was in family-owned corporations, making determination of value difficult.
39. Linsley Interview.
40. Editorial, *Dominion News*, 23 October 1972.
41. *Historical Atlas of Tuscarawas County, Ohio*, 1875 and 1908 (combined); reprinted, Strasburg, Ohio: Gordon Printing, 1973.



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# Anna Marie Reeves Jarvis

1832-1905

by Estella R. Pomroy



*MOTHER'S Day is a legacy—a gift handed down to all generations. Celebrated in many countries of the world, the holiday is especially meaningful to West Virginians who know the story behind the occasion.*

*The story begins with the birth of Anna Maria Reeves. Tracing her life of service, it shows the extraordinary accomplishments that made her daughter want to establish a day in honor of all mothers.*

*Anna Maria Reeves Jarvis' life encompassed all the elements of drama: love, service, loyalty, war, and death. Her story will continue as long as Mother's Day is celebrated.*

Most of the history of Anna Maria Reeves Jarvis would be lost if it were not for Howard H. Wolfe's book, *Mother's Day and the Mother's Day Church*. In writing the history of Andrews Methodist Church, Wolfe included most of the biographical information known about the woman in whose honor Mother's Day was established.(1)

Anna Maria Reeves was born in Culpepper, Virginia, on September 30, 1832, to Reverend Josiah W. and Nancy Kemper Reeves. Josiah Reeves was a Methodist minister who was transferred to Philippi in Barbour County in 1845 when Anna Maria was twelve years old. The family included her older brother, James Edmund, younger sister, Emily, and younger brothers, Thomas and Joseph.(2) The move of less than 150 miles must have been an exciting one, because it required crossing the Appalachian Mountains and probably included a long train trip as well as horse-drawn wagons to move the family and all their household goods to their new home in Philippi.

While Reverend Reeves served the Methodists, the Reverend Solomon Jarvis was pastor at the Baptist Church in Philippi.(3) Reverend Jarvis also owned and operated a large farm, feed store, and mill. He and Henrietta Rightmire Jarvis were the parents of Granville E. Jarvis, born in 1829 at Pruntytown. The two families, Reeves and Jarvis, must have been well-acquainted in the small town of Philippi.

Anna Maria Reeves grew to maturity, developing into a charming and accomplished young woman. She possessed a lovely singing voice and was a talented public speaker. Her voice, personality, intelligence, and general abilities assured her destiny as a leader.

The Reeves and Jarvis families were united in 1852 by the marriage of Granville E. Jarvis and Anna Maria Reeves. The young couple made their home in Philippi for the next two years, during which time two children were born to them. Their first child Josiah would live to maturity. The second child would survive only two years. The couple would have twelve children, only four of whom would live to adulthood.(4)

In 1854, the young Jarvis family moved sixteen miles north to the village of Webster, in Taylor County. Granville Jarvis considered this railroad terminus town an excellent place to establish a mercantile business, as his father had done.(5) The feed and general supply store flourished, and he built a two-storied frame home for his growing family.(6)

By 1858, three more children had been born to the Jarvis family. Only one of these, Claude, would live to maturity. Anna Maria had devoted herself to homemaking activities and caring for her family, but the early deaths of three of her five children brought her to a decision: she would take action against the unsanitary conditions that existed in all of the small local communities and were largely responsible for fatal diseases of children. Doctors were unable to cure these illnesses, and nursing and medical facilities were inadequate.

Anna Maria's natural gifts of leadership and intelligence enabled her to form an organization of women called the Mothers' Day Work Clubs in each of the small towns of Webster, Grafton Junction, Fetterman, Pruntytown, and Philippi.(7) Through her insistence, nearly every mother in the area belonged to one of the Clubs. The objective was to clean up and correct unsanitary conditions. She recruited her brother, Dr. James Edmund Reeves, and Dr. Amos Payne to lecture and teach the Club members about health and sanitation. The two physicians outlined the work that had to be done, assigned tasks, inspected completed projects, and acted as general advisors to the Clubs.

The Clubs raised money to provide medicine for indigent families and employed women to help care for families in which mothers were found to have tuberculosis. All bottled milk for children was inspected, and the water supply, food preservation, and sewage disposal were carefully monitored. By 1860, the success of these Mothers' Day Work Clubs was so apparent that the doctors issued a statement urging other communities to follow the same plan to solve their problems. Ironically, Anna Maria's sixth child, a son, born in the same year, would live only two years.

Despite her own tragedy, Anna Maria Jarvis worked even harder. Her Mothers' Day Work Clubs remained active and were destined to provide a much needed service during the Civil War.

The year 1861 found Taylor County a center of activity for both the Union and Confederate Armies. Both sides were vigorously recruiting men throughout the western part of Virginia. Although Virginia had seceded, many people living west of the mountains protested the disruption of the Union. Anna Maria Jarvis, a Virginian by birth, is believed to have been sympathetic with the Union cause.(8) However, in the interest of the people of her community, she maintained an attitude of strict neutrality. After the first cannon was fired on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, the members of the Mothers' Day Work Clubs began to voice their sympathies for either the Union or the Confederate cause. Anna Maria quickly realized the implications for the Clubs of possible political disagreement and called a meeting of all Clubs at the church in Webster. At that meeting, she persuaded all the women to swear an oath that friendship and good-will would prevail in the Clubs for the duration and aftermath of the war.(9)

The first Union casualty of the war occurred at Fetterman on May 22, 1861, when Thornberry Baily Brown was shot by a Confederate sentry.(10) Tension in the community was strained to the limit due to the divided sympathies. At the funeral of Private Brown, there was only one person in the audience with enough courage to offer a prayer. Colonel James K. Smith wrote later that Anna Maria Jarvis came forward, and, with head bowed over the dead soldier, made a beautiful and moving prayer. (11)

In the meantime, troops were being moved into the area by both the North and South. Located about halfway between Washington, D.C., and the Ohio River, Grafton, Fetterman, and Webster were strategic points in the country's transportation system. Generals Lee and McClellan both dispatched companies of soldiers whose orders were to secure the railway terminals. The first land battle of the Civil War was won by the Union Army at Philippi on June 3, 1861.(12)

General George B. McClellan was commander of the Union Army of Ohio and was ordered to secure the western counties of Virginia for the Union. Following the victory of his forces at Philippi, his officers urged him to join them. He left Ohio and took personal command at Clarksburg about June 20, 1861. A few days later he inspected the area around Grafton Junction. About June 24, he commandeered the downstairs rooms of the Jarvis home in Webster as his headquarters. (13) He remained there for several days before moving south to the Rich Mountain area to be in position for the next battle.

The personalities of these two strong individuals, General George B. McClellan and Mrs. Anna Maria Reeves Jarvis, must have made for an interesting household. While the General was planning the strategies for the battles of Rich Mountain and Corricks Ford, Anna Maria was occupied with directing the Mothers' Day Work Clubs as they nursed the sick and wounded soldiers of both the Union and Confederate Armies. Typhoid fever and measles were epidemic in the community. One war bulletin read, "Our soldiers are dying like rats. Can't get coffins fast enough."(14) The road in front of the Jarvis house was

clogged with a constant stream of soldiers on their march east. Supplies of food and clothing, sanitation facilities, and shelter were quickly exhausted. More than 15,000 military personnel were gathering in Taylor, Barbour, and Randolph counties. Anna Maria grieved for the soldiers and the mothers who had reared them for better things than the senseless war in which they were caught up.

General McClellan was a quiet and considerate man who required all of his troops to respect the property of the civilian population. He was a gentleman and family man whose frequent letters to his wife provide a clear picture of his character.(15) He must have had great admiration for his hostess in Webster. This extraordinary woman managed her home, gave birth to her seventh child, was active in all of the community activities, and directed virtually all of the nursing efforts for both the Union and Confederate Armies in the area.

On July 2, General McClellan transferred his headquarters to Buckhannon. After his successes in western Virginia, he was called to Washington, D. C. to take command of the Grand Army of the Potomac.(16) The counties west of the mountains had been secured for the north.

As the war moved into its second year, hopes for a quick resolution to the conflict dimmed. Civilian and military alike faced a life of deprivation and hardship. The year 1862 must have been the worst year of Anna Maria Reeves Jarvis' life. Three of her children died: seven-year-old Clara, two-year-old Ralph, and baby Maria.

Amid her sorrow, Anna Maria found that she was expecting her eighth child, but she continued to provide the leadership necessary to hold the dissident factions of her community together. By all accounts, her Mothers' Day Work Clubs and the oath of unity she had extracted from the members served to maintain peace among neighbors.(17) In 1863, another son, Wesley, was born and died, and, by autumn, Anna Maria was pregnant with her ninth child.(18)

On May 1, 1864, Anna Jarvis was born.(19) It was Anna whose great love for her mother resulted in the establishing of the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day. At the end of the war, Anna Maria's husband decided that Grafton would be a better location for business and moved his family to that growing community. The next two years brought two more children. Thomas was born in 1866, but lived only to age seven. Elsinor Lillian, born in 1867, survived and grew to maturity. Another daughter, the twelfth child, Ellen, died in infancy sometime after 1868.(20)

By 1868, Anna Maria Reeves Jarvis had given birth to twelve children and lost eight of them; participated actively in her church; successfully tackled her community's public health problems; maintained peace among hostile neighbors during the Civil War; helped nurse the sick and wounded soldiers of both the Union and Confederate Armies; housed the Commander General of the Union Army; and always served as a forceful leader in her area. All of this happened by the time she was 36 years old.



Throughout Anna Maria's life, she often expressed the idea that there should be a day set aside on which everyone would honor mothers. She was often heard to say, "I hope someone, sometime, establishes a Memorial Mother's Day, for mothers—living and dead." (21) Perhaps it was her personal anguish at the loss of eight of her twelve children, or her empathy with mothers of those poor soldiers trudging past her home in 1861, or perhaps the strength exhibited by the mothers of the community in correcting inadequate health problems and maintaining peace in the neighborhood that made Anna Maria a champion of motherhood.(22)

The soldiers returning to Taylor County in 1865 included neighbors and relatives who had fought on opposing sides. Intense hatred resulted in feuds, reprisals, and retaliation. Once again Anna Maria Jarvis rallied her Mothers' Day Work Clubs.(23) Reminding them of their sworn oath of impartiality, she organized "Mothers' Friendship Day," to be held in Pruntytown at the Courthouse. Each member was asked to invite veterans of both sides. She instructed the mothers to mingle freely among the crowd as a deterrent to trouble. The members were cautioned to use the "Mothers' Friendship Day" because Granville Jarvis believed the title did not suggest anything negative, such as division, prejudice, or enmity. Anna Maria and half of the women dressed in gray, while the others dressed in blue.

On the appointed day that summer of 1865, such an immense crowd gathered that the leading citizens became fearful of violence. Most of the men wore their uniforms and carried guns. Anna Maria was asked to dismiss the crowd at once, to which she replied, "I will not; I'm no coward."(24) The program began with a short speech by Anna Maria Jarvis, followed by band music and the singing of "Dixie," "The Star Spangled Banner," and "Auld Lang Syne." People began weeping and embracing one another. One of the leading ministers later said that it was the most remarkable meeting he had ever attended.(25)

"Mothers' Friendship Day" continued to be observed for several years in Pruntytown. Anna Maria's Clubs are credited with averting much of the post-war strife and bloodshed that many border communities endured after the Civil War.

A short time after the war, Grafton had grown into a fairly large town. The Methodist Church congregation purchased land on Main Street in 1871 and broke ground for Andrews Methodist Church the following spring.(26) Anna Maria, a lifelong member of the Methodist Church and daughter of a Methodist minister, directed her considerable energies toward the fund-raising activities necessary to complete the new building.(27) She helped to organize suppers, fairs, and festivals to support the building fund. The new church was dedicated in 1873, and Anna Maria became the Sunday School teacher of the nursery and primary departments. She served in this capacity for over 25 years. Her singing voice was a welcome addition to the church music programs. She was exceedingly well versed in the scriptures, and she was a



popular speaker. Her two main topics were "Women of the Bible" and "Great Mothers of the World."(28)

The four Jarvis children who survived were never neglected, despite the incredibly busy life of their mother.(29) Josiah W. P. Jarvis, the oldest, graduated from Western Medical College in Baltimore in 1876 and practiced medicine in Marion County. Claude, the second surviving son of Granville and Anna Maria Reeves Jarvis, was a successful businessman who established the first large taxi cab business in Philadelphia. Their daughter Anna was educated at Mary Baldwin College and returned to Grafton to teach in the high school. Elsinore Lillian was educated in Grafton's public schools and remained at home with the family.

Church, family, and community activities continued to be the center of Anna Maria's busy life for the remaining years of the 19th century. Her husband's failing health occupied much of her attention until his death in 1902. Soon after his death, son Claude invited his mother and sisters, Anna and Lillian, to make their home with him. The women sold their property and joined him in Philadelphia, where the two sisters eventually became wealthy stockholders in their brother's taxi company.

Anna Maria Reeves Jarvis lived only two years after her move to Philadelphia.(30) She died on May 9, 1905, and was buried in West Laurel Hill Cemetery, Bala-Cynwyd, in West Philadelphia. Her three grief-stricken children were standing beside her open grave when daughter Anna vowed, "Mother, that prayer made in our little church in Grafton calling for someone, somewhere, sometime to found a memorial to Mother's Day—the time and place is here and the someone is your daughter, and, by the grace of God, you shall have that day."(31)

On that day, Anna Maria's home church in Grafton tolled out solemnly 72 tones, one for each year of her life. One year later the church commemorated her death by decorating the sanctuary in her honor and delivering eulogies during the services. That year and the next were to witness one of the most intensive campaigns ever waged by one individual, and for a cause that became all but an obsession to Anna Jarvis.

On the second anniversary of Anna Maria Jarvis' death, May 12, 1907, a brief unofficial program was presented at Andrews Methodist Church in Grafton and several other places in the country.(32) The great movement toward establishing a world-wide observance of Mother's Day was gaining momentum as a result of the single-minded purposefulness of daughter Anna. Among the supporters for her cause, Anna Jarvis counted philanthropists H. J. Heinz and John Wanamaker of Philadelphia.(33)

The first official Mother's Day celebration was held in Grafton and Philadelphia on May 10, 1908.(34) It was first observed in a service from 8:00 a.m. until noon at Andrews Church, and in a second service held from 1:00 p.m. until 5 p.m. in the Wanamaker Store

Auditorium in Philadelphia.(35) The second Sunday in May was selected as Mother's Day by Anna Jarvis, who wished to provide her mother with this fitting and well-deserved memorial.

President Woodrow Wilson signed the Congressional Resolution that confirmed and established Mother's Day on May 8, 1914. It designated the second Sunday in May as an official day for displaying the American flag and for publicly expressing love and reverence for the mothers of the country.(36)

In 1952, the General Conference of the Methodist Church adopted a resolution designating Andrews Methodist Church in Grafton, West Virginia, as a National Methodist Shrine. The church includes a Jarvis Memorial Room and Sunday School Class. This beautiful and historic church contains many reminders of Anna Maria Reeves Jarvis, including stained glass windows and paintings. Many people from all over the world have made pilgrimages to the church, which is marked with a plaque that reads: "Mother Church of Mother's Day." Each year the church is open on Thanksgiving Day and again on Mother's Day for a joint memorial service for the founder of Mother's Day and her mother.(37) Anna Jarvis lived to participate in the celebration for 40 years.(38)

Anna Maria Reeves Jarvis was a woman whose lifetime is a monument to values and virtues that are held in high esteem. On the one hand, her strength, determination, and indomitable spirit moved her to try to correct the problems of her time, and on the other, her graciousness and appealing personality made her achievements possible. Hers was a life to inspire the founding of Mother's Day, the third most widely-celebrated holiday in the world, preceded only by Christmas and Easter.

## ENDNOTES

1. Howard H. Wolfe, *Mother's Day and the Mother's Day Church* (Kingsport, TN: Kingsport Press, Inc., 1962), chapters 9-15.
2. Ibid., p. 175; p. 248-254; p. 261.
3. Ibid., p. 175.
4. Ibid., p. 175-176.
5. Ibid.
6. The house was purchased in 1977 by the West Virginia Organization of Daughters of the American Revolution and is being restored to its 1850s appearance and furnishings. It is being preserved as a memorial to both the founder and the first mother of Mother's Day, Anna and Anna Maria Reeves Jarvis.
7. Wolfe, *Mother's Day and the Mother's Day Church*, p. 180-182.
8. Ibid., p. 186.
9. Ibid., p. 183.
10. Stan Cohen, *The Civil War in West Virginia* (Charleston, WV: Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, 1982), p. 22.
11. Wolfe, p. 182.
12. Boyd B. Stutler, *West Virginia in the Civil War* (Charleston, WV: Education Foundation, Inc., 1966), pp. 24-37.
13. Wolfe, p. 179.
14. Ibid., p. 183.
15. Bruce Catton, *The Army of the Potomac: Mr. Lincoln's Army* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1962), pp. 53-60.
16. Ibid.
17. Jim Comstock, *West Virginia Women* (Richwood, WV: By the author, 1974), pp. 224-25.
18. Wolfe, p. 261.
19. Ibid., p. 257.
20. Ibid., p. 261.
21. Comstock, p. 225.
22. Wolfe, pp. 187-188.
23. Ibid., pp. 183-187.
24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., p. 13.
27. Ibid., p. 190.
28. Ibid., p. 187.
29. Ibid., pp. 254-260.
30. Ibid., p. 191.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., p. 192.
33. Comstock, p. 225.
34. Wolfe, pp. 192-195.
35. Comstock, p. 225.
36. Wolfe, pp. 205-206.
37. "The Living Memorial of Anna Jarvis," *Charleston (WV) Gazette*, 13 May 1956.
38. "Mother's Day More Solemn This Sunday," *Parkersburg (WV) News-Sentinel*, 8 May 1949.

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# Minnie Holley Barnes

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1899-

by Sally Sue Witten



*INNIE Holley Barnes represents the legions of women who have devoted their lives to educating the children of America. Although she was not born in West Virginia, she came to the state to further her own education and stayed to help build its educational institutions. Her career began in the schools for black children in coal camps. In 1927, she began to teach at the State School for the Colored Deaf and Blind at Institute, and she was one of the teachers who integrated a similar school at Romney in 1954. When she retired in 1962, she had completed 40 years of work in schools, 35 of them in schools for the deaf and blind. Her devotion to these special students can be seen in her lifelong search for better instructional techniques and her determination to expand their horizons through social activities. West Virginia's concern for handicapped citizens is a reflection of Minnie Holley Barnes' contribution to this state.*

"Know Miss Holley? She has been my idol since I was a little girl," responded Betty Randle, handicapped-student counselor at West Virginia State College, when asked if she knew Minnie Holley Barnes.

As a child, I was fascinated with the way she communicated with the deaf children she brought to church. When I visited playmates in Institute, I would get them to go over around the School for the Colored Deaf and Blind, just in hope that Miss Holley would come out, and I could watch her talk to them with her hands. I admired her a long time from afar, before I ever had the courage to talk to her.(1)

Because she did not marry until she was past 60 years of age, most people still call her "Miss Holley" or "Miss Minnie" rather than "Mrs. Barnes." She is such a comfortable person to be with that it is easy for even new friends to call her "Miss Minnie" almost as soon as they have met.

When Minnie Holley went to Institute, West Virginia, in the fall of 1927 to be the supervisor of girls at the State School for the Colored Deaf and Blind, she was paid \$45.00 a month plus room and board.(2) She was responsible for about 20 girls or women who ranged in age from six to 30. It was her job to see that they did their household chores around the dormitory. She also supervised their leisure-time activities on nights and weekends. With several years of teaching in one-room schools behind her, she had a knack for establishing rapport with children quickly and easily. She soon undertook to learn sign language from an experienced teacher.

The path to the School for the Colored Deaf and Blind, where Miss Holley was to spend the next 28 years, had not been easy. Born in Tazewell, Virginia, on September 26, 1899, she was the tenth of 13 children born to parents who had been freed by the Emancipation Proclamation.(3) Economic necessity required that the children go to work at an early age, but her parents' aspirations for their children led them all to couple work with school. At the age of ten, Minnie began to work in the homes of white families. She continued such work until she had completed the seven years of education that the public schools provided for black children in Tazewell. She moved to Bramwell, West Virginia, where two years of high school were available to blacks, and West Virginia became and remained her home almost continuously for many decades.

From Bramwell, Minnie went to Storer College at Harpers Ferry. Storer College had been founded in 1867 by the Free Baptists and had an education department that trained many black teachers.(4) During one year at Storer College, Minnie worked in a boarding house, doing chores, waiting tables, and feeding a cow. During the second year at Storer, she worked in the school kitchen.(5)

After graduating from Storer College and spending the summer of 1920 at Bluefield College, Miss Holley was granted a West Virginia Temporary Teaching Certificate. For the next few years, she taught in a succession of one-room schools for black children in coal camps in Kentucky and West Virginia. Sometimes she had as many as 68 children in eight grades in one sparsely-equipped classroom.(6)

During these early years of teaching in coal camps, Miss Holley became an avid reader of books written by Grace Livingston Hill. When Hill came to visit her daughter, who lived in Williamson, West Virginia, she made a public appearance. Miss Holley was delighted to learn that Hill would speak in a church that she knew would not turn away blacks. She was thrilled to see and hear the author in person. For years afterwards, she read Grace Livingston Hill's novels to blind girls and other youth with whom she worked. Sixty years later, there are about 20 paperback reprints of Grace Livingston Hill's romances on the end table on Miss Holley's sun porch. She says she visits flea markets in search of missing volumes and has a friend with whom she trades duplicates.(7)



After West Virginia broke away from Virginia during the Civil War, the new state had to develop its own institutions. The state established Schools for the Deaf and Blind in Romney in 1870. It was not until 1926 that the State School for the Colored Deaf and Blind was opened at Institute. Until 1926, no provisions had been made for the education of handicapped black children, except to send blind children to a school in Maryland at state expense. Minnie Holley joined the staff of the school at Institute during its second year. The first ten years of the new school were a period of experimentation, because experienced teachers were hard to find.

The curriculum of the school included the usual academic subjects for grade and high school. It also included vocational subjects such as barbering, beauty culture, shoe repair, and tailoring. Miss Holley was so successful as supervisor of girls during her first year that she was asked to become a teacher of beauty culture the second year. The promotion brought a raise in salary to \$75.00 a month plus room and board. While she was a cook in an Atlantic City hotel during the summer, she had to find someone who would give her some lessons in hair care and styling to prepare her for her new duties.

Hilda Meadows Tyree, who was the girls' supervisor for 13 of the years Minnie Holley taught at Institute, said, "She was the most devoted teacher I ever knew. She loved the children, and they loved her in return. She was firm with them, but there was nothing she would not do for the children. She never gave up on a child no matter what trouble they [sic] caused."<sup>(9)</sup> Reuben Siggers, who taught at the school for 14 years, said, "Miss Holley loved the children. They were crazy about her."<sup>(10)</sup> The mutual affection is demonstrated by Miss Holley's scrapbooks, which are filled with letters and pictures of former students and their children and grandchildren. Though blind and deaf, these former students, whom Miss Holley calls "my children," have a remarkable record of success in jobs and as homemakers.

Teaching the deaf to communicate through sign language, the manual method, predominated during the early years of the school. Lip reading, or the oral method, was practiced later. Even today, experts hold different opinions about which method is best. Adopting a style of communication that combined both methods, Miss Holley was ahead of her time.

Miss Holley feels it is essential for the deaf to learn lip reading because most of their lives will be spent with people who do not know sign language. On the other hand, some people have so little lip movement that it is impossible to read their lips. It then becomes essential to know sign language as an alternative method of communication. She is critical of today's practice of mainstreaming deaf children in classes with children who do not have handicaps. She says too many teachers of mainstreamed classes rely on lip reading. As a consequence, deaf children are deprived of the opportunity to learn to sign.<sup>(11)</sup>

Often sign language is taught as a kind of shorthand. Phrases are used to communicate ideas instead of full sentences. Sometimes Miss Holley would insist that students sign by the straight method, i.e., full sentences instead of short phrases. Sometimes she drilled academically-talented students in the straight method. As a result, they were able to compete favorably on college entrance exams and went on to become successful professional people.(12)

In the spring of 1934, the School for the Colored Deaf and Blind was thrown into turmoil by murders and suicide. The State Board of Control was investigating the accounts of the institution, especially the use the superintendent had made of funds collected in the vocational shops where fees were charged for services to the public. During the investigation, the superintendent appeared in the dining room during breakfast, delivered a talk to the students and faculty about his honesty, and then shot three members of the staff. Two of those shot died. The superintendent committed suicide. The newspaper reported speculation that the superintendent had sought revenge against faculty members who had given evidence concerning his money-handling practices.(13)

Fortunately, Miss Holley had not come to breakfast on the day of the shooting, but it was a difficult time for her. One of those killed was the man she intended to marry. Another was an older teacher who had become something of a mother figure to her.(14)

After the shootings, Miss Holley was given more responsibility as interpreter for the deaf and as teacher of academic subjects. Being a teacher of the deaf meant more than just teaching academic courses. Miss Holley recalled that her duties included teaching students the correct names of the various parts of their bodies and about their functions. She said that she was very unhappy when some teachers taught slang words for parts of the body rather than correct anatomical terms. Deaf students sometimes also depended on her to explain the actions of other people. One of the hardest explanations she had to make was to a deaf white student at nearby West Virginia State College. The young man frequently volunteered to come to the School for the Deaf and Blind to lead recreation for younger boys. Some of the black college students began to call him "nigger," a term he had not previously known. Miss Holley had to explain "nigger" to him.(15)

Mary Snow, an educator and friend of Minnie Holley's for several decades, said, "Minnie Holley is the most unusual person I know in regard to both her inward beauty and her professional teaching competencies."(16) Maybe she was born with inward beauty and the instincts of a master teacher, but Miss Holley worked hard to acquire an education to prepare her to work with the deaf. By attending classes on Saturdays and during summers, she was awarded a bachelor's degree from West Virginia State College in 1937. During the summer of 1938, she attended a session on speech development and language for the deaf at the University of Toronto in Canada. In the summer of 1939, she attended Ypsilanti University in Michigan to take courses in

speech, lip reading, and language development. In 1941, she was awarded a master's degree from Columbia University. She also did advanced work at Columbia and at the University of Southern California. Some years later, she received a certificate in religious education after spending several summers at Union College in Richmond, Virginia. Some summers, when she was not going to school, she taught teacher education courses at Bluefield State College.(17)

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Brown vs. Board of Education* declared that "separate but equal" schools were unconstitutional. That decision soon brought West Virginia's system of segregated schools to an end. As a result, the State School for the Colored Deaf and Blind at Institute was closed. Its facilities housed the newly-opened West Virginia Rehabilitation Center. In Romney, the West Virginia Schools for the Deaf and Blind were integrated.

In the fall of 1955, Miss Holley, along with three other faculty members and several black children, was transferred to Romney. Miss Holley had been at the school at Institute for 28 years. At the time of her 25th anniversary, faculty and staff had a party for her. On that occasion, Superintendent A. E. Boling's remarks included this statement:

With profound gratitude for all that she has contributed to the progress of this school over the years, with humble pride in anything I may have done to aid and encourage her, with full recognition of her sterling qualities of heart and mind, and with earnest prayers for her continued health and happiness, I pay tribute to that patient, skillful teacher, that inspired friend of the handicapped, that incarnation of the spirit of sacrifice and unselfishness, that great exponent of all that is finest and best in true womanhood—our own Miss Minnie C. Holley.(18)

Moving from a segregated school where she enjoyed the respect of faculty, staff, and students to an integrated school was not easy. There were many tensions with the white faculty and students unfamiliar with working with blacks. There was also tension because Miss Holley was the only teacher in the school with a master's degree. It was she who taught advanced deaf students.

Miss Holley tells about the deaf son of a prominent white family who had done well at Romney. When he got to her class, however, he refused to participate and paid no attention to the signing or lip reading. When she spoke to him privately, he said that he did not like having a black teacher. She told him that if he did not succeed in her classes, his whole adult life would suffer. She urged him not to let her race keep him from progressing in his studies. Somehow, her words reached him. He began to pay attention in class and to participate. After successfully completing school at Romney, he went on to become a successful, self-sufficient adult.(19)

It was not long before Miss Holley's qualities were apparent to others in the Romney school, and she soon adjusted to a fairly comfortable routine. She taught at Romney for seven years. Then in 1962, after teaching a total of 40 years, she retired. A few years

earlier—after her 60th birthday—she had married Charles Barnes. He, too, was retired. They returned to live in her native Tazewell, Virginia.

Retirement for Miss Holley was a shifting of gears so that she could spend more time at some of the volunteer activities she had enjoyed for years. Girl Scouting has been a major love of hers for more than 40 years. "Although she is past 80, we consider Minnie Holley Barnes one of our most active and valued volunteers," said Alice Long, program director of the Black Diamond Girl Scout Council in 1983. "During the past winter, she taught a folk dancing class for girls and a leadership course for troop leaders. This summer she is involved in program activities for girls in at least two camps," continued Mrs. Long.(20)

Miss Holley's participation in Girl Scouting started during the 1937-38 school year. A girl from Ohio, who was attending West Virginia State College, wanted to start a Girl Scout troop at the State School for the Colored Deaf and Blind. At that time, there were no troops for black girls in Kanawha County. Together with several other black women, Miss Holley sought and received permission from what was then the Kanawha County Girl Scout Council to start troops for black girls. In 1939, Miss Holley was the interpreter for deaf girls in the first black troop. From 1940 to 1955, she was troop leader, sometimes of three troops simultaneously. Almost from the beginning, she was variously day camp counselor and day camp director at a camp near Institute. For several years, she was on the staff of a camp for black girls at Camp Clifftop. Mary Snow, who was sometimes the director of the camps in Institute and Camp Clifftop, said:

Minnie was always willing to do more than her share for the girls. The camps included both normal and handicapped girls. Minnie's troops were primarily handicapped girls. She saw to it that the deaf and blind girls participated in all kinds of activities and did service projects for others. She really believed in the character-building purpose of Girl Scouting.(21)

The quality of the program enjoyed by the handicapped girls in Miss Holley's troop was so well known that the troop had an extraordinary number of distinguished visitors. Mrs. Samuel Lawrence was known as the "first Girl Scout" because her aunt, Juliette Low, founder of the Girl Scouts, had asked her to be the first member of the first troop, which met in Savannah, Georgia, on March 12, 1912. As an adult, Mrs. Lawrence lived in Charleston and was a frequent visitor to Minnie Holley's troop. Sometimes she invited the troop to come to her house. The blind girls particularly enjoyed being allowed to play the electric organ.(22)

The troop was also visited by Lady Baden-Powell, World Chief Guide, whose husband had been the founder of the Guiding movement in England, which later sparked both Girl and Boy Scouting in the United States. Lady Baden-Powell was in Charleston in March 1946, on her first post-World War II visit to the United States. She spoke at a program in the Charleston Municipal Auditorium attended by 2,000

Girl Scouts. The occasion was the celebration of the Silver Jubilee of Girl Scouting in Charleston and included a pageant portraying Girl Scouting's progress from a neighborhood organization to a worldwide movement.(23) The next day she visited the troop at Institute.(24)

At the meeting with the troop, Lady Baden-Powell expressed some of the international emphasis that her press interviews and speech at the Municipal Auditorium had reflected. One point that she stressed was that the Girl Guides had defiantly continued to meet in Nazi-occupied countries. "After liberation in such countries as France and Italy, Girl and Boy Scout movements mushroomed on the heels of retreating armies. They began doing relief work, met openly, and paraded." She also said, "A tired and war-torn world is crying for a bond of friendship and is looking to the United States for inspiration, leadership, and stimulus in everything that is finest in civilization."(25)

In 1947, Miss Holley attended a handicapped conference sponsored by the Girl Scouts of the United States of America at their training center at Camp Edith Macy at Pleasantville, New York. The purpose was to discuss the content of materials to be made available to leaders of handicapped troops.(26)

Dorothy Stratton, national executive director of the Girl Scouts, visited Miss Holley's troop in 1952.(27) Dr. Stratton was a distinguished educator and a member of the President's Commission on the Employment of the Physically Handicapped.

In 1954, further recognition of her work with handicapped girls came when Miss Holley was asked to write an article for *The Girl Scout Leader*, a magazine circulated among the several hundred thousand adults who volunteered with the Girl Scout movement, which was then approaching two million members.(28) In the article, she told about blind and deaf Scouts who had completed school and were making their way as adults. They had told her that they learned as much in Girl Scouting as in all their school subjects, and had had fun in the learning. The article included descriptions of rich program activities ranging from "sound hikes," which could acquaint deaf girls with the sounds of the out-of-doors, to learning about other countries and races through folk dancing and songs.

The Thanks Badge is the highest award conferred by Girl Scouting. Ordinarily, it is awarded by a local Girl Scout Council to one of its members. In the case of Miss Holley, the award of the Thanks Badge was made by the national organization at a national convention in Cincinnati in 1954. It was typical of Miss Holley that she took two troop members to the platform to share the honor with her.(29)

Her experience with Girl Scout camping led Miss Holley to positions in other types of camps. During the summers of 1949 through 1956, she was on the staff of Camp Joy near Cincinnati. It was an integrated camp for inner city children, both boys and girls, sponsored by the Cincinnati Presbytery and by the Ohio Episcopal Diocese.(30) During one of those summers, she took a teenager from Kanawha County with her to be on the camp staff for his first work experience



away from home. Young Herman Canady later became the first black circuit court judge in Kanawha County, appointed first by Governor Rockefeller and then elected to the post.(31) From 1959 to 1961, she worked in a Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, day camp operated by a Methodist Neighborhood Center.

Others might have used retirement as an excuse to cut back on their work in the community. Miss Holley, however, became even more involved. She organized a Girl Scout troop at a high school in Tazewell. During many summers since she retired, she has directed or been on the staff of camps. In 1983, when she was approaching her 84th birthday, she told the Girl Scouts that she was really too old to be on the day camp staff. In response, the girls changed the camp's name to Camp Minnie Barnes.(32) Miss Holley could not resist the invitation to lead some songs and folk dances at the camp. She also made a visit to Camp Clide Browder near Bluefield.

In 1971, the Girl Scout Council awarded Miss Holley a Girl Scout statuette, which is displayed prominently in her living room. She also displays a certificate, awarded by the Black Diamond Council in 1982, naming her a Woman of History in Girl Scouting.(33)

She has continued to be a trainer of leaders in the Council. Maintaining the status of trainer at age 83, Miss Holley attends the required refresher events. She was a prominent participant in 1982 at a program conference held at Jackson's Mill near Weston, West Virginia.

The Methodist Church has been a source of strength for Minnie Holley throughout her life. Since retirement, she has had more time to go beyond local congregation activities to participate in the district and conference activities of the church and Methodist women's groups. In June 1983, she attended the annual meeting of the Holston Conference at Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, as a district delegate. She says that she voted for bilateral nuclear disarmament and against the ordination of homosexual clergy.(34)

Perhaps only the Commonwealth of Virginia thinks of Miss Holley as an octogenarian. She is not too happy with the Commonwealth because it has recently required her to take a driver's test in order to renew her driver's license. Others do not seem to worry about her slowing down. On display in her living room is a 1967 plaque from the Golden Key Club for her many contributions to Tazewell. In 1979, the Virginia Education Association gave her an award through its minority caucus. In 1981, Tazewell County named her grand marshal of the Christmas parade.

When she spoke to the McDowell County Retired School Employees in 1980, she urged them to be alert to contemporary issues and to understand the conditions that youth must cope with today—drugs, crime, violence, and hate. She also reiterated a statement that she has made on a number of occasions: "I am an instrument in tune with God, and I never try to hit an off note."(35)

The several generations of young people that Minnie Holley Barnes calls "my children" would probably agree that she has hit very

few off notes. The blind, the deaf, the sighted, and the hearing would all agree that Adlai Stevenson's remark about Eleanor Roosevelt would apply equally to Minnie Holley Barnes: "[She] would rather light a candle than curse the darkness, and her glow has warmed the world."(36)

### ENDNOTES

1. Interview with Betty Randle, June 1983.
2. Interview with Minnie Holley Barnes, June 1983.
3. Minnie C. Holley, *Glimpses of Tazewell County Through the Holley Heritage* (Radford, Virginia: Commonwealth Press, Inc., 1977) pp. 9 and 28.
4. Ancella R. Bickley, *History of the West Virginia State Teachers Association* (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1979), p. 22.
5. Minnie Holley Barnes, *Holl's Hurdles* (Radford, Virginia: Commonwealth Press, Inc., 1980), pp. 21-23. Hereafter referred to as *Holl's Hurdles*.
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7. Interview with Minnie Holley Barnes, June 1983.
8. Charles H. Ambler, *A History of Education in West Virginia* (Huntington, WV: Standard Printing and Publishing Co., 1951), p. 692.
9. Interview with Hilda Meadows Tyree, July 1983.
10. Interview with Reuben Siggers, July 1983.
11. Interview with Minnie Holley Barnes, June 1983.
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13. *The Charleston Gazette*, 14 and 15 April 1934.
14. *Holl's Hurdles*, p. 44.
15. Interview with Minnie Holley Barnes, June 1983.
16. Interview with Mary Snow, July 1983.
17. *Who's Who of American Women*, 1958 ed. (Chicago: A. N. Marquis Company, 1958).



18. *Holl's Hurdles*, pp. 87-88.
19. Interview with Minnie Holley Barnes, June 1983.
20. Interview with Alice Long, June 1983.
21. Interview with Mary Snow, July 1983.
22. *Holl's Hurdles*, p. 68.
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24. *The Charleston Gazette*, 25 March 1946.
25. *The Charleston Gazette*, 26 March 1946.
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28. *The Girl Scout Leader*, 1954, published by the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.
29. Interview with Alice Long, June 1983.
30. *Holl's Hurdles*, p. 78.
31. Interview with Julia Canady, June 1983.
32. *Clinch Valley News*, 22 June 1983.
33. *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*, 4 April 1980.
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35. *Welch Daily News*, 25 April 1980.
36. Adlai Stevenson, on the death of Eleanor Roosevelt, 7 November 1962.

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# West Virginia Farm Women's Club

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1914-

by Shirley C. Eagan



*STRENGTH in numbers! United we stand! Such sayings suggest the influence that groups can have in accomplishing tasks.*

*Women working together do indeed accomplish much. The West Virginia Extension Homemakers Council, formerly called the West Virginia Farm Women's Clubs, provides one example of this principle in action. The development of special programs for Club members has spanned the greater part of this century and has contributed much to the development of the state itself. Farm Women's Clubs have improved homes and communities by enabling women to work together. Improving rural schools and libraries, assisting in war efforts, initiating home industries, and promoting good health are among the efforts undertaken by Club members. The history of the Clubs parallels the development of West Virginia in the twentieth century.*

*The story that follows provides highlights of the early attempts of this women's organization to make a difference in the rural communities of West Virginia while broadening the horizons and skills of the members. Many West Virginians today are touched in some way by the efforts of these early Club members to improve West Virginia's communities.*

In the early part of the twentieth century, Farmers' Institutes were conducted throughout the state by agricultural organizations. They helped the farmers improve skills and increase the quality and quantity of farming operations. The farm women, who also attended these Institutes, began to request programs that could help them improve their homemaking skills. Institute planners developed special programs for the farm women in response, and the numbers of women participating grew.

At these Institutes, women had their appetites whetted for more information from West Virginia University and Extension workers. As

a result, Farm Women's Clubs formed in rural communities. Often, these groups were the only organizations—other than church groups—available to rural women. One woman later wrote:

The Farm Women's Club program is one of the most progressive steps that West Virginia has ever taken. The Farm Women's Club has opened up unbelievable vistas to the rural woman and has developed leadership in communities where leadership was sorely needed.(1)

In 1919, the state organization, called the West Virginia Farm Women's Clubs, was founded. In 1926, the organization broke away from the Farm Bureau, becoming an independent group known as the West Virginia Farm Women's Bureau. In 1944, the name was changed again to West Virginia Farm Women's Council. In 1954, it became the Home Demonstration Council, and, finally, in 1968, the organization became known as the West Virginia Extension Homemakers Council. Today this organization has over 800 groups and 14,000 members in West Virginia's 55 counties.(2)

The first Farm Women's Clubs in West Virginia were organized in 1914. Then, as now, the sponsoring organization was the Cooperative Extension Service, the outreach phase of West Virginia University, a land-grant college established in 1862. In 1914, Congressmen Asbury F. Lever of South Carolina and Hoke K. Smith of Georgia aided land-grant colleges by sponsoring a bill that made the Extension Service an official educational arm of the United States Department of Agriculture. With this legislation, Extension became a nationwide system funded and guided by a partnership of federal, state, and local governments. Extension exists to deliver information that helps people help themselves through the land-grant university system.(3) When sponsoring this legislation, Congressman Lever commented:

Our efforts heretofore have been given in aid of the farm man, his horses, cattle, and hogs, but his wife and girls have been neglected almost to a point of criminality. This bill provides the authority and the funds for inaugurating a system of teaching the farm wife and farm girl the elementary principles of home making and home management, and your committee believes there is no more important work in the country than is this.(4)

Thus was laid the foundation for the Farm Women's Club program and the 4-H Club program that followed.

Farm Women's Clubs have been assisted by Extension's many county home economics agents, specialists, and state program staff. Some of the influential early state leaders included people such as Gertrude Humphreys (state home economics leader for 40 years), Anne Boggs, Margaret Ford, Jessie Lemley, and others. These leaders served as role models for the many farm women who joined the organization. One woman noted that while growing up she had "... lived near a home demonstration agent, and her ideas were so practical, and her ideals so inspiring that she did much to allay ... apprehensions about life on a farm."(5)

The functions of the Club program have always been to bring homemakers together for organized study and service to the community; to serve as a nucleus for a program of continuing education; to provide local, county, and state leadership for extending educational programs in home economics to non-Club families; and to serve as a source of knowledgeable leadership and competent action in emergency situations.

(6)

Information provided by local leaders helped the farm women broaden their interests, develop self-confidence and leadership skills, and improve family and home life. This was accomplished in a variety of ways, but most importantly through the organizational structure of the program. Each Club met monthly in a member's home, often with some members traveling many miles to attend. At the meeting, members enjoyed a combined program of education, business, and fellowship. A study topic was presented by a local member who had been trained at a county-wide meeting. These topics reflected the interests and needs of rural women throughout West Virginia. Other activities included a business meeting presided over by the officers of the Club, community projects, committee reports, reports of individual members' projects, and other Club-sponsored activities and workshops.

Overall, Club women benefited in many ways. Essay contests in 1946 and 1949 produced the following comments about "What Farm Women's Club Work Has Meant to Me":

Farm Women's Club work has brought about a real transformation in our community. . . . Before the Club was organized, there were only two or three women who would assume responsibility of leading public meetings. Through training and practice . . . any member is [now] able to lead Club meetings while the majority can preside at large gatherings. (Reka Francis, Lewis County)

A few of the neighbor women, myself included, felt we were living very narrow, humdrum lives and having a Club seemed to us a possible solution for our trouble. . . . [I] learned to do my work in an easier and better way, to serve better and more nutritious meals in a more attractive way, to be more neighborly and less just a timid household fixture. . . . [To] sum it up, . . . Farm Women's Club work has done more to make my life really worthwhile to me than any other thing. (Fanny Teter, Upshur County)

I learn something practical or inspirational, useful or cultural, every time I go to a meeting. I really feel that it has enriched my life immeasurably. (Charlotte M. Dickson, Greenbrier County)

. . . each of us is learning to make her home a little democracy, for, after all, that is where citizenship begins. (Mary Holt Johnson, Greenbrier County)

Farm Women's Club work helps women find out how to express themselves by appreciation of each other's worth, by exchange of ideas, by the process of learning what goes on

through lessons, and by bolstering each other's courage in the dark hours of life. (Isabelle Hudkins, Barbour County)(7)

As the comments indicate, members realized the benefits to the community and to themselves that were derived from working together in an organized effort toward common goals. One opportunity came early in the organization's history. During World War I, the fledgling Clubs supported community canning centers, which were sometimes called war kitchens in the cities. Mobile field kitchens were set up wherever a large surplus of fruits and vegetables were found. Slogans related to food production and preservation emphasized Club goals: "Help West Virginia Feed Herself" and "Food to Spare and Share."(8)

Farm Women's Club members were also encouraged to sew garments for distribution to hospitals in war-torn countries, and urged to support every war drive and to produce and conserve as much as possible.(9) This last program developed into an extensive "live at home" program following the war and was continued into the Depression years. It included special projects to help families increase their income and to save money through cooperative buying programs.

Another early effort, the Country Life Movement, helped strengthen the members' belief in community effort. This program was designed to improve not only agriculture, but also sanitation, education, home-making, and other aspects of country life. Through community score cards, conferences, and other activities, communities were stimulated to work together to undertake projects that developed roads, utilities, and other services.(10)

Farm Women's Clubs were active in this program. In some counties, members were the catalyst that organized Country Life Conferences and community scoring. In most communities, members served on committees, assisted with improvement projects, and helped put the plans into action. In many cases, the objectives and plans of the local Clubs and the community coincided, and the two groups worked together toward common goals for the enrichment of the entire community.(11)

Nat T. Frame, former director of the Cooperative Extension Service and founder of the Country Life Movement, described the Clubs' work:

The growth in the ability of West Virginia farm women to express themselves, individually and in groups, and the increased influence they exert, both in their local communities and in the state, has been the outstanding development in country life in West Virginia during the past 20 years. . . . [These women are] genuinely interested in country life . . . anxious to perpetuate through the influence of their families and their communities the things that are basic in the long-term program of rural development.(12)

Through the Country Life Conferences, members and leaders tested their capabilities for analyzing and solving their own problems and became more interested in human values, churches, families,



schools, and other facets of the community's life that contributed to abundant living.(13) These programs led naturally into other phases of the Club program, especially the work of the committees of the Farm Women's Clubs, including schools, health, citizenship, and recreation.

Farm Women's Club members undertook the enrichment of schools attended by the children of the community. Much of this work was performed by the Health and Schools Committees of the Farm Women's Council.

The "kettle boils while school goes on as usual" could easily have been the saying in many rural schools in the 1920s. A publication called, "The Hot Lunch in Rural Schools" (Circular 262), was used to encourage teachers to serve a hot dish at school that would supplement the cold lunch brought from home. The program's goal was to help children put into daily practice the rules of nutrition that they were learning in classes in physiology and hygiene. The program also enabled pupils who did not get adequate nourishment at home to eat at least one balanced meal a day.(14)

Genevieve Krafft, a Harrison County homemaker, writes of her recollections of student life in a Braxton County rural school in 1923:

[We] got two I'd say 13-quart blue-and-white granite kettles, a two-burner oil stove, some sugar, cocoa, salt, each one brought his or her milk, and some potatoes. We'd make cocoa, potato soup, or cook a big pot of beans. Everyone brought his own bread. . . . But then came one Monday morning we went to school and our stove and pots were all gone. Someone had climbed and got a window open. We had lost everything even to the sugar.(15)

Once the program started in the schools, Clubs frequently continued to help out. In addition to providing the food—either canned or fresh—for the hot dish, members often prepared the dish. As the "hot dish" program expanded into a hot lunch program, Clubs and the community helped obtain needed equipment, such as stoves, counters or other working space, storage facilities, cooking and serving utensils, cleaning supplies, and sometimes even electrical or gas service. During the war years, assistance with the hot lunch program increased as many farm women planted green vegetables and other produce destined for the schools' hot lunch programs.(16)

The hot lunch program was one of the most visible programs carried out by Farm Women's Clubs, but several other activities for public school improvement were also sponsored or implemented by the group. The list of these activities is long: holding receptions for teachers; sponsoring visiting days for parents; working with parent-teacher organizations; establishing and/or adding books to school libraries; purchasing playground and other needed equipment; helping with playground supervision; securing more and better bus service; having school wells tested; sponsoring reading circles for parents; becoming informed of existing laws affecting education and lobbying for new laws; and monitoring local school board decisions.(17)

As the concern for the health of school children prompted the promotion of the hot lunch program, home and community sanitation had a high priority in early Club health programs. Homes were screened, water supplies were tested and treated, and campaigns were conducted for the building of closed sanitary toilets. Major emphasis, however, was given to the installation of home water systems complete with a bathroom, kitchen sink, and a properly-installed septic tank.(18)

Personal health care was also an important part of the Clubs' work. A familiar scene in many communities in the early 1920s was the gathering of mothers, with their babies and toddlers, at a community center for well-child conferences.(19) Local Club members often recruited the mothers to the program and volunteered to help at the conferences. When the doctor or nurse arrived, all was ready for him or her to examine the children and confer with the mothers. In many communities and counties, the monthly conferences reached large numbers of families with practical health education. Some Clubs assisted families to follow up on the corrective measures prescribed by the doctor. Because public health units were not yet established in many counties, these conferences and Club services were especially important. (20)

Other activities promoted by the Clubs to members and their neighbors—physical examinations and immunization clinics against such diseases as smallpox, diphtheria, and typhoid—were preventative. From 1934 to 1940, over 52,600 immunizations were given through Club-sponsored clinics.(21)

By working with the pre-school conferences, immunization clinics, and similar activities, Club members became firmly convinced that a need for public health workers and other health services existed. Through the influence of these Club women and other health-minded citizens, several counties devoted funds toward the establishment of county public health departments.(22)

In addition to assisting in community efforts, Farm Women's Club members were also concerned about economics. Miss Gertrude Humphreys, former state home economics leader, writes:

In horse and buggy days in rural West Virginia, it was not unusual to see a farm woman driving toward town with eggs, butter, cottage cheese, . . . dressed chickens, and other home products which she delivered to regular customers each week.(23)

Other women obtained the family's staples by exchanging home-grown and handmade items at a local store. For many farm families, the major source of cash income after the field crops or livestock were sold was from the poultry flock, family cows, garden and fruit trees—usually cared for and maintained by the farm woman—or handcrafted products made largely by the women in the family.

An Extension study of family income and women's interest in home industries indicated a need for helping to find additional ways of making money for farm families. In response to these findings, a business, the "4-H Gift Shop," was opened in Clarksburg in November

1922. To stock this shop, items were collected from farm women throughout the state. This first venture in cooperative marketing brought articles valued at more than \$1,000 from 20 counties.(24) More importantly, the shop won a favorable vote to continue operation. Later, the shop was incorporated as the Mountain State Home Industries Shop, Inc., with stock selling at \$5 per share. Goods for sale included fresh foods, baked goods, butter, eggs, poultry, cottage cheese, sausage, canned goods, and handmade items.

Although the Clarksburg shop was to have been a sales outlet for producers from the entire state, it soon became obvious that this scheme was not practical. Therefore, the corporation decided to open branch shops where needed and requested by county home industries committees or home central committees, the forerunners of today's county Extension Homemakers Councils. Branches were opened in Wood, Randolph, Lewis, Cabell, Ohio, Brooke, and Upshur counties. The Harrison County Home Industries Committee took over the management of the state shop. Home industries shops in West Virginia grew until the late 1940s when marketing procedures, transportation, and sanitation laws became less favorable to this kind of outlet.(26)

The home industries shops provided a sales outlet for many homegrown and homemade products. Not only did they generate a substantial income for rural families, but they provided a source of fresh, good-quality food for local consumers who could not get these products easily. Total annual volume of business in these shops ranged from about \$17,000 in 1926 to over \$55,000 when more of the shops were operating.(27) Money received was used by Club members for many things: remodeling kitchens, installing water systems, financing college educations for children, buying new furnishings, taking trips, or obtaining something else that resulted in more pleasant living and greater satisfaction.(28)

Another project that helped make money for many farm families was the Mountain State Tourist Home Program, which was co-sponsored by the West Virginia Farm Women's Clubs and Extension. Farm families living in large houses along highways were helped to establish tourist homes for the accommodation of travelers. While providing service to the public, these families increased their income by renting extra bedrooms and serving homegrown foods to tourists.(29)

Initially, only a few families were interested in the project. Others soon joined the program, however, and proudly displayed the "Mountain State Tourist Home" sign. Brochures announced such features as home atmosphere, excellent food, courteous treatment, peaceful rest, and moderate cost. The motto of the program became "Every Mountain State Tourist Home is A Home Away From Home."(30) This project survived until after World War II, when competition from the growing motel industry made its continued operation impractical.

From the organization's beginning, West Virginia Farm Women's Clubs promoted reading as a way of relaxing and learning. Concern

was often expressed about the kinds of books families had access to and read. In many communities, it was the Farm Women's Club that started or expanded school libraries for children.

Promotion of good reading for the whole family began in earnest in 1934, when a list of recommended books was sent to all Farm Women's Clubs.(31) It was not long before a number of Clubs began to buy books for the use of Club members and their neighbors. Once the books had been read locally, they were donated to local libraries.(32)

In an effort to make books more readily available to rural people, the West Virginia Farm Women's Bureau bought 76 books to send out to counties as a "traveling library." The books were divided into five sets and were made available to counties through the Extension office or the home central council. Each request for a set of books was accompanied by a distribution plan. The five sets of books began their travels in 1938 and were in almost constant demand for the next five years.(33)

In 1943, the demand for the "traveling library" decreased because local libraries had a greater number of books available. Moreover, the Library Commission had been established by state government. Lending services were introduced from the Commission headquarters in Morgantown, and the "Better Library Movement" was launched.(34) From then on, Farm Women, Extension, and the Library Commission staff worked together to develop a state-wide reading program and to increase the number of local libraries.

One project in which many Club members took part was the effort to increase access to county bookmobiles. When the state Library Commission was struggling to extend services, Farm Women's Councils conducted campaigns throughout the counties and worked with county officials to find financial support for the bookmobile program.(35)

In 1946, the "Reading with a Purpose" program started. Still in operation today, this program encourages the homemaker and her family to read with a goal in mind. Reading is a source of entertainment and relaxation, but it is also a means to acquire ideas and information that can help solve problems. These ideas can also stimulate discussion of important national and international issues, events, and trends.(36)

Ideas and action go hand-in-hand for Farm Women's Club members. This is especially true in times of crises. "Feed the Family First" was a program initiated in 1938 and carried on into the mid-1940s, when it became a part of the national "Food for Freedom" program. Through this program, thousands of families were given practical ideas on how to produce the maximum amount of food on the land available. They also learned to conserve, use, and share food that had to be brought into the community from outside sources. Farm Women's Club members extended their knowledge to non-member neighbors and are due much of the credit for the success of this program.(37)

During 1940 and 1941, in addition to helping feed their communities, Farm Women assisted in the operation of 337 mattress-making centers in which over 700 communities participated. Sixty-eight hundred families made over 10,000 mattresses. Much time was given by volunteer leaders in this program. For example, 1,096 women leaders gave 4,219 days, and 424 men provided 857 days of assistance.(38)

Clubs also participated in all the war drives. In one year—1943—state Clubs collected \$15,464 for the Red Cross and sold over \$288,997 worth of war bonds.(39)

Spearheading community war efforts were the neighborhood leaders. Two leaders in each neighborhood—a man and a woman—saw to it that all families in the assigned areas received information that would help them provide for their own needs as well as contribute to the war effort. In West Virginia's 4,836 neighborhoods, many of the female leaders were Farm Women's Club members.(40)

These special programs during the war years added much to the comfort, health, and welfare of many West Virginia families. They gave countless numbers of leaders a feeling of satisfaction in the service they had rendered and brought Farm Women's Club members into close contact with families that needed the educational assistance provided.

As the Club program grew in numbers from the first Club established in Ohio County in 1914 to the over 8,500 members in 35 counties in 1946, members and leaders were involved in many activities.(41) Throughout the years, these activities were carried out by women who wanted to help others. Their efforts have led to improvement in the quality of life and have broadened the horizons of the participants. Club members have expanded their scopes of interest beyond those of the family and church to encompass issues of county, state, national, and international importance.

In her book *Adventures in Good Living*, Gertrude Humphreys, former state home economic leader for the Cooperative Extension Service, summarizes the first 50 years of Club work in West Virginia by noting that:

West Virginia home demonstration work . . . was marked by the importance attached to human values, to the development of individuals for useful citizenship in and beyond the community, and to the family as the most influential unit of society. Also, its key leaders and members had a dedicated sincerity of purpose, a fine sense of values, and an insatiable desire to be of service.(42)

These basic values, ideals, and attitudes have carried over and now are part of today's Extension Homemaker programs of lifelong learning and enriched living for individuals, families, and communities.

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# Gertrude Humphreys

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1895-

by Margaret Phalen McKenzie



*A* West Virginia Cooperative Extension worker, Gertrude Humphreys once crossed 14 fences to reach a club meeting. On other occasions, she rented a horse and buggy in inclement weather or hitched rides with mail carriers to reach her destination. At other times, she and a companion maneuvered across the coal fields of Mercer County in a Model T Ford and, after reaching the end of the automobile road, drove in the middle of the railroad track until they got to their destination. Gertrude Humphreys was a woman on the move.

The life of Gertrude Humphreys is inseparable from her work with what is today known as Extension Homemakers. Her expertise in developing educational programs throughout the state and her skills in organizing communities to work toward common goals extended the horizons of countless rural women from 1919 to the present.

It is a long adventurous journey from Organ Cave in Greenbrier County to the big cities of the state and nation; from the one-room school of Irish Corner to Phi Beta Kappa honors at the University of Illinois; from being a shy little sunbonnetted farm girl to state home demonstration agent with scores of farm womens' clubs and hundreds of farm women to supervise. It is a journey that requires much time, abundant patience, unlimited persistence, and being satisfied with nothing but the best.(1)

Gertrude Humphreys, the woman alluded to in the epigraph above, was the seventh and last child of Mathew Nelson Humphreys and Mary Christina Rogers Humphreys. She was born April 28, 1895, at Organ Cave, West Virginia. She grew up in a very happy home and enjoyed working with animals on the family farm. After completing her elementary education in a one-room school, Miss Humphreys received her secondary education in Charleston, West Virginia, and then, in 1919, she was graduated from the University of Illinois with a B.A. in Home Economics. She had hoped to become a school teacher. At the

time of her graduation, however, there were no openings in West Virginia high schools for a teacher of home economics only. Because she had decided to live and work in West Virginia, she did not seek an out-of-state position.

Other employment was available, though. In the summer between her junior and senior years of college, Miss Humphreys had assisted in a food conservation program in Wayne and Cabell counties. While serving in that World War I project, she had had her first direct contact with the 4-H Club program and the Farm Women's Clubs. Prior to graduation, she had been offered an Extension Service position in West Virginia. In late summer, she wrote a letter of acceptance. Without delay, a wire came asking her to "report for duty" the next day. She joined the Agricultural Extension Division in August 1919 at the Princeton headquarters. She became the Home Demonstration Agent of Mercer County and remained an Extension worker from that day until her retirement in July 1965.(2)

Since Mercer County lacked a 4-H Agent to work with girls, Miss Humphreys voluntarily assumed leadership of the 4-H Girls' Program. With enthusiasm and a willingness to undertake more than was required, she embarked as teacher and leader upon a career that would reach beyond the boundaries of her own state and nation.(3) After four years of work in Mercer County, she was asked to accept a similar position in Harrison County with headquarters in Clarksburg. Work in each of the counties gave her a better understanding of the Extension Service program and of the possibilities it offered to rural people as a part of the land grant college and university systems of education.

Her experience in Mercer County had been particularly helpful. She had worked closely with the school superintendent and school principals and had attended meetings of parents and teachers. She had participated in discussions aimed at helping members of the school community move toward a better understanding of the ways the Extension Service and the schools could work together for the advancement of the school program, 4-H Clubs, and the community. In Harrison County, her three years of service featured Country Life Conferences and what they could mean to individual persons, communities, and the county as a whole.(4) There had been close cooperation between various groups and organizations.

In 1926, Miss Humphreys was assigned to the state office of the Extension Service of West Virginia University in Morgantown. She progressed from State Home Economics Specialist to District Agent, to State Agent, and, finally, to State Home Demonstration Leader in 1933. She continued in that position until her retirement.

The rural women's groups had undergone name changes since 1919. Known first as the West Virginia Farm Women's Clubs and later as West Virginia Home Demonstration Clubs, the groups eventually became the West Virginia Extension Homemakers Council. In 1972, at the request of and under the sponsorship of the West Virginia Extension Homemakers Council, Miss Humphreys wrote *Adventures in*

*Good Living*. Spanning the years from 1863 (when the West Virginia Legislature accepted the Land Grant College Act that Congress had passed in 1862) until the middle 1960s, this text was intended to serve as a:

... reference book for persons who are interested in the development, achievements, and future possibilities of the home demonstration program of WVU's Cooperative Extension Service ... to inspire families and individual citizens to make lifelong learning a great adventure as they advance toward enriched living in the home, and in the enlarged community.(5)

In the foreword of the book, Anne Boggs DeBolt and Russel H. Gist give credit to Gertrude Humphreys and note that "because Miss Humphreys compiled this history, her contributions and achievements have been glossed over."(6)

Others have detailed her accomplishments and her winning manner, as is illustrated by the following biographical sketch published by the West Virginia Agricultural Hall of Fame, to which Miss Humphreys was elected:

Gertrude Humphreys for 46 years was a pioneer in the West Virginia University Extension Service, developing program planning in the home demonstration program and directing a program for rural people that included the development of educational materials in health, citizenship, international programs, and public affairs .... Modest and unassuming, she preferred to work "behind the scenes" and to give credit to others. She spent her working hours, all her working career, every day of the year, in pursuit of better information, greater enlightenment of people, and creating understanding.(7)

Intelligent, eager, and courageous, accomplishing her own duties conscientiously and quietly, she has expected high standards from others and has earned the respect of rural families by her example. Her leadership and confidence in others have been inspirational. Under her guidance, many women developed leadership abilities. As she criss-crossed the counties by trolley or car, on horseback or on foot, attending school meetings and assisting in the organization of Clubs, she made lifelong friends.(8)

As she contemplates the past, Miss Humphreys finds it difficult to separate the Extension Homemakers program from herself since she put her entire professional life and her major interest into it. She has described herself and the Club members as "growing up together." She said, "If one just ignores that program [Extension Homemakers] as one of the results of my work, the major part of the work is ignored. When that is eliminated from the recognitions and awards I have received, there is no meaning to the recognitions, since they really should have gone to the program; I became the recipient only because I was leader of a large part of the whole program."(9)

Gertrude Humphreys' character, values, and insights have influenced several generations of West Virginia women. As an educator, she

understood the special needs of farm and rural women in the early days of this century. She was impressed by their desire to learn and improve. Nearly all Club members were full-time homemakers who were interested in becoming better homemakers, in cutting down on the drudgery of their work, in obtaining the best possible training for their children, and in learning more about nutritious and attractive meal planning, sewing hints, and many other topics. There was a feeling of trust, and the women looked to the agent for help. Realizing the earnestness and seriousness of these women, Miss Humphreys made every effort to provide the kind of help they needed. She observed that "[t]he basic reason for the success of the Farm Women's Organizations in early years was the way in which they themselves were willing to work hard and to work cooperatively with others for the improvement of their homes and their communities."(10)

In response to their desire to learn and improve, Miss Humphreys recalls that she took a closer look at her responsibilities and examined her objectives. Three objectives seemed to her to be most important:

1. To develop a sound educational program to meet the needs and interests of homemakers and their families.
2. To work with groups of homemakers and their families to promote programs of education and action.
3. To encourage and inspire individual homemakers to further develop their own abilities and talents through a plan for lifelong learning, toward the goal of being a better homemaker, and a more useful citizen.(11)

With these objectives in mind, she relates how she began to plan a series of 12 monthly lessons for the coming year, 1933. Topics included interests and needs that homemakers had expressed at county and state meetings. "Much thought and time went into developing each lesson, which included adequate factual information, questions intended to stimulate a desire for further information, and an outline for the leader to use when planning the group discussion."(12)

The first lesson, written in the midst of the Great Depression, was appropriately entitled "Outwitting Time and Money." Since the first series of lessons was well received by the groups, the Extension staff thought it would be wise to prepare a new set of lessons for the next year. This was done each year, including 1965, the year of Miss Humphreys' retirement. She herself wrote the lessons, unless she selected another person to write on a particular subject. Usually, she selected a university staff member or a specialist in the field of study. In any case, it was her responsibility to see that all lessons and outlines were prepared, printed, and sent to the Clubs for leader training meeting in advance of the actual Club meeting.

Miss Humphreys acknowledges that she was profoundly influenced by an idea expressed by Ruth Sayre, an Iowa farm woman who was president of the Associated Country Women of the World: "The home should be the center of every homemaker's life, but never the circumference."(13) That philosophy guided Miss Humphreys in the prep-



aration of the lessons, which, it is important to point out, were used not only by Home Demonstration Clubs, but also by church groups, P.T.A.s, and other organizations within the counties. Intended to be tools for continuing education and leadership development, the complete *Adventures in Good Living* series is preserved and available in each area Extension office.(14)

One of the major interests of the Club members lay in rural health, and they worked diligently for many years in almost every aspect of the field. For her part, Gertrude Humphreys obtained for the Clubs the information and assistance needed from experts in the health field. She then educated and inspired the women to take action. Representing all the state leaders in the nation, she served for ten years on the advisory committee to the Council on Rural Health of the American Medical Association. In 1961, the West Virginia Public Health Association recognized her work in this field and presented her the "Citizen's Award" for outstanding service.(15)

As their horizons broadened and they became more self-confident, homemakers began to reach beyond their homes and churches, fulfilling the ideal fostered by Miss Humphreys that the homemaker let her home be "the center of her life, but not the circumference." They began embracing more national and international interests. In the 1940s, two projects were conceived and activated in West Virginia: the Purposeful Reading Program and the International Student Program.

The Purposeful Reading Program evolved from the basic concept of adult education held by the homemaker's organizations. Miss Humphreys brought a special dimension to this concept since she had been reared in a home environment where books were treasured and reading encouraged. This seemed to be coupled with her own regard for knowledge from authoritative sources and a strong desire to share this knowledge. In 1930, a state adult education committee was appointed and became the channel for continuing her encouragement of reading and study. Step by step, progress was made until the Purposeful Reading Program was born in 1946. Women associated with this project from the early days comment on Miss Humphreys' ideas and suggestions, which were the foundation for the program. They also cite that "spark" that she provided through her initiative and leadership.(16) Yet Miss Humphreys emphasizes that "in no way must the contributions of those who cooperatively carried out the program be diminished."(17)

As the name implies, the objective of the program was:

[t]o encourage the homemaker and her family to read with a purpose — not only for entertainment and relaxation — but for ideas and information which would help in the solution of problems of great concern to her as a homemaker or as a citizen; also, to stimulate interest in, and discussion of important national and international issues, events, and trends. It was suggested that each person read at least three books on a subject to get the viewpoints of different authors; the reader would then have a better background for reaching her own conclusions.(18)

Evaluating the project, Miss Humphries wrote, "This program was a great stimulus to the reading of well-chosen books and to lifelong learning by hundreds of West Virginia adults." (19) In a recent interview, she reiterated, "That reading plan is one that, I think, has meant a lot to the people of the state." (20)

The second program, the International Student Program, has been a project close to the heart of numerous Extension Homemakers. It is a program of far-reaching significance:

A monumental undertaking of the State Home Demonstration Council was the promotion of world peace and understanding through a scholarship program for women students of other countries to attend WVU in preparation for work with the rural people of their native lands. Miss Humphreys worked closely with the Council in selecting the students and giving them guidance during their period of training in West Virginia. Since 1949, this scholarship project has been an important part of each year's program in home demonstration work. (21)

The International Student Scholarship at WVU was established only a short time after the end of World War II, and the decision was made to seek a student from Germany as its first recipient. It was believed that much of the future of post-war Europe depended on the German women, and that one of the best ways to teach them the democratic way of life was to let them see and learn, first hand, how rural people in this country live and work together. Therefore, the intention of the West Virginia farm women was that this should be a gesture of friendship and good will between nations. Gertrude Humphreys was instrumental in getting it started. She was involved in the selection of the students, and, after they arrived at the University, she took them under her leadership. She proved adept at helping them learn different ways of promoting Extension programs in their own countries, to which they would return as leaders. (22)

The international program seems to have had wholehearted support through the years. It was decided in the beginning that each member would be asked to contribute voluntarily at least 25 cents a year to the Student Fund. Freely and generously the women gave, and more than enough money was collected to provide the first student's expenses. Support for the program continues today. (23)

As a retirement gift to Miss Humphreys in 1965, the West Virginia Home Demonstration Council presented her with a "credit card" to be used to visit and to evaluate the work of former international scholarship students wherever they were. After completing her tour, she wrote of being "thrilled to see how much some of the former students had developed; to realize how much at ease they were as they worked with groups; to see the place of importance each had in her own country; and to sense their deep appreciations for what the people of West Virginia had done for them." (24)

In her later years, Gertrude Humphreys returned to live in the big white farmhouse at Organ Cave where she was born. During interviews

at her home, she recounted events of her 90 years of active living. Her life seems to have been a satisfying, positive adventure. She has retained her sense of humor and, with a vivid memory, she recalls events and persons from her earliest Extension days. She maintains a lively interest in nature and art, and she says that she would love to work with young people today if she were more mobile. She is well informed regarding the problems of the 1980s — crime, drug abuse, child abuse — and, with her continuing vision, she suggests possible solutions through appropriate Extension and school system approaches.(25)

The contributions of Gertrude Humphreys, West Virginia pioneer in the areas of adult education and lifelong learning, find confirmation in the words of her co-workers in Extension service:

She was a teacher and leader in this work for almost 50 years. Her enthusiasm, dedication, planning ability, and vision have left a mark on home demonstration work that will remain . . . . Those who have been a part of Extension work in West Virginia, and indeed in the United States for the past several decades, are well aware of her tremendous contributions to the development of people. And that is what Extension is all about.(26)

## ENDNOTES

1. I. B. "Tubby" Boggs, popular state boys' 4-H leader, wrote this introduction in an article entitled "Little 4-H Journeys," *4-H Suggestions* 14 October 1932, read widely by state 4-H youth and leaders. Boggs (1890-1955) has been enshrined in the West Virginia Agricultural Hall of Fame.

2. Interview with Gertrude Humphreys, Organ Cave, WV, 1 August 1985.

3. Gertrude Humphreys, *Adventures in Good Living*, with a foreword by Anne Boggs DeBolt and Russel H. Gist (Parsons, WV: McClain Printing Co., 1972), pp. xv-xvi.

4. Humphreys Interview.

5. Humphreys, p. xx.

6. Humphreys, pp. xvi-xvii.

7. *West Virginia Agricultural Hall of Fame*, 2nd ed., 1979.

8. As one 50-year member of the Farm Women's Clubs exclaimed, "If you had a leader like Miss Humphreys, you just did wonders! She got us going." She is labeled "loyal," "sincere," "knowledgeable," "dearly loved," "highly respected," and "comfortable to be with." Those whose lives she has touched include: Pearl Bratton Faulkner, Princeton, WV, 40-year member and past state president; Nell Bratton Faulkner, Princeton, WV, past 4-H leader and past 4-H agent; Mildred Hancock, Morgantown, WV, past county president; Mary Elizabeth Crumpecker (Sis) Lohr, past county president; Beatrice McCann, 50-year member and long-time resident of Rupert, WV; Marie McDougal, Mannington, WV, past county and state president; Hattie A. Reiner, Morgantown, WV, past state and national president; Margaret F. Rexroad, Morgantown, WV, retired Marion County Home Demonstration Agent (37 Years); Hilda Hogue Sweeney, Mannington, WV, past county president; Helen Waters, Fairmont, WV, retired Rural Home Counselor, Monongahela Power Co.; and Jeanette C. Poe, Fairmont, WV, past state secretary.

9. Interview with Gertrude Humphreys, Organ Cave, WV, 23 January 1985.

10. Humphreys, pp. 1-4.

11. Humphreys Interview, 1 August 1985.

12. Ibid.

13. Humphreys Interview, 23 January 1985.

14. Some selected titles illustrate how interests extended from the home into the community, the state, the nation, and the world: "Good Citizenship Begins at Home" (1938); "Getting Along Well in the Community" (1945); "West Virginia Tax Dollars" (1952); "American Democracy at Work" (1952); "The Farm Home and National Affairs" (1937); and "The Family Prepares for Lifelong Satisfaction" (1965). The titles indicate the scope of the lessons, but,

as Miss Humphreys pointed out in the August interview, "it is difficult to measure results when one thinks in terms of individual influences and the changes that take place in people."

15. Among her many honors, she considers the highest to have been the Order of Vandalia, awarded by WVU at its 1969 Commencement Exercises. This honor is in recognition of the contributions she made to the University. The recommendation that she receive the Order of Vandalia was made by the West Virginia home demonstration agents, including some of the retired Extension workers and members of the WVU faculty.

16. Interview with Fairmont Group, Fairmont, WV, 16 January 1985. Interview with Nell Bratton Faulkner and Mary Elizabeth (Sis) Crumpecker Lohr, Princeton, WV, 10 February 1985.

17. Humphreys Interview, 23 January 1985. Individuals whose work she cites include Dr. Rebecca Pollock of WVU English Department, valued member of the Farm Women's Camp staff for years, who stimulated interest in reading among the women, and willingly selected books for circulation in a "traveling library" program from 1938 to 1943; Anne Boggs, assistant state leader and advisor to the state education committee, who devoted much time, thought, and effort to the program; other Extension staff members and homemakers' organizations; and the State Library Commission, which made the books available.

18. Humphreys, pp. 112-114. Still in existence, the program presents ten categories of books, which are revised each year. Under Miss Humphreys' leadership, in 1946, two categories were added: "We Live In An Atomic Age" and "Family Life and Child Development." These were two timely subjects, since the first atomic bomb had recently been used to end World War II, and, at the war's end, family life needed careful scrutiny. Each year, a new category was added or revisions made. In the mid-1960s, about the time of her retirement, there were nine categories. The list included: happy family relations; child guidance and development; spiritual values; mental and physical health; the world today; art and nature in everyday living; better management; our American heritage; and a knowledge of outstanding people through their biographies.

19. Humphreys, p. 114.

20. Humphreys Interview, 23 January 1985.

21. Humphreys, p. xvi.

22. Fairmont Group Interview. According to the group interviewed, Miss Humphreys was also interested in the emotions of the girls and personally furnished necessities in addition to grant funds. The women who gave this information have been connected with the program from its inception and continue to remain in close touch with the first recipient of the scholarship, Roswitha von Ketelkordt who came from Germany to West Virginia in July 1949. She was highly intelligent, made friends wherever she went throughout the state, and met all the qualifications set forth by the International Relations Committee. On her part, Roswitha felt surprise, relief, and inner satisfaction to find that people of West Virginia held no animosity toward her or her people in spite of the recent war. She returned to Germany and, for ten years, was

employed by her government in youth work comparable to 4-H work in West Virginia. She presently resides in Munich.

23. An integral part of this program was that the Club members study a foreign country, preferably the current student's native land, in order to gain a better understanding of her cultural background and experience. Then, when the student visited the different counties, her talks to the Clubs were more meaningful. As a result of these studies and of the visits of students to various homes throughout the state, Club families not only found new interests, but also developed a feeling of friendship for people from many countries. Miss Humphreys thinks this program of extending home economics abroad has had enough success to show that it has been, and still is, a worthy project. In the January interview, she claims that she knows of no organization in the country that has followed through so consistently and consecutively. The student for the school year 1984-85 is Yewelsew Abebe, from Ethiopia. In the years between the first student and the present student, the following countries have been represented: Greece, India, Turkey, Mexico, Colombia, Korea, Japan, Paraguay, West Pakistan, Ireland, Kenya, Tanzania, Iceland, Bangladesh, Jamaica, and Liberia.

24. Humphreys, p. 222.

25. Humphreys Interview, 23 January 1985.

26. Humphreys, pp. xvi-vii.

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# Genevieve Starcher

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1902-

by D. Banks Wilburn and  
Delmer K. Somerville



AMERICANS have generally agreed that education is essential to the vitality of their system of republican government, the performance of the responsibilities of citizenship, and self-fulfillment of the individual. A corollary, also broadly accepted, is that the quality of education is dependent, above all else, upon the preparation of teachers, supervisors, and administrators. One of the greatest criticisms of the early public schools in West Virginia was that the teachers were poorly prepared and instruction was of poor quality. Unfortunately, certification at first rested with county superintendents, many of whom lacked any real preparation for their duties. They administered the examinations, collected the fees allotted them, and assumed little more responsibility. One step forward was the introduction of uniform examinations and the issuance of certificates based upon scores attained. Another resulted from requirements of specified numbers of hours in college courses for certification.

Genevieve Starcher probably did more than any other person in the history of the state to organize, systematize, and oversee the certification process in teacher education. During her 35-year tenure as Director of Teacher Certification in the State Department of Education, standards were consistently raised, and teachers had to demonstrate their qualifications for their profession by completing required hours of college work germane to their levels of teaching, with depth in their academic disciplines and attention to courses relating to teaching methods, learning processes, and child development.

In changing well-entrenched patterns of teacher preparation and ending many *laissez-faire* practices that survived, Miss Starcher often encountered resistance from teachers, county superintendents, and college administrators. She persisted in her objectives, however, with the confidence that she was in step with national trends and the views of recognized educators. Partly by strength of will, she overcame opposition, and, when she retired from her position in 1968, West Virginia had in place procedures and policies that gave its teacher certification and licensure system acceptance throughout the nation.

*Important as were the contributions of Miss Starcher to her community and her county throughout her career, and particularly during her retirement years, her work in teacher certification will remain her greatest monument.*

In the March 5, 1983, *West Virginia Hillbilly*, Jim Comstock looked back nearly 50 years and commented on a requirement by Genevieve Starcher, State Supervisor of Teacher Certification, that he repay his student loan at Marshall University before being granted renewal of his teacher certificate. Comstock wrote:

At the end of my first teacher term, I apply in person at an office in the new State Capitol building. A hard-boiled, good-looking redhead named Genevieve Starcher is in charge of certification. She checks me out quickly, efficiently. I am good for another year . . . if. If and when. Mostly "when." When I take care of my obligation back at Marshall. The lecture is brief. "The fund is needed for other, er, uh, Jim Comstocks." My certification will be renewed when I present a receipt from Marshall. Briefly, I returned home and before the summer was over I appeared with that dearly bought piece of paper—I wonder now how I did it!—and I was teaching again that fall. Miss Starcher wherever she is, if indeed she is, should be in Washington, and in charge of collecting delinquent accounts.(1)

Yes, Jim, Genevieve Starcher is alive and well at One Starcher Place, her family home, in Ripley, West Virginia, where she is active in business, community, and church endeavors.

The Starchers were pioneers whose native intelligence was honed by the circumstances of the times. Jacob Starcher, Genevieve's great-great-grandfather, arrived in Jackson County in 1803 and became Ripley's first permanent settler. Genevieve is a member of the fifth generation of the family to live in Ripley. Her father, Samuel G. Starcher, was employed at the age of 18 in Ripley's Valley Bank, after taking full advantage of the education locally provided, including Professor Oberholtzer's Upper Branches, an extension of the regular elementary school, where Samuel studied business subjects. By nature, Samuel was an entrepreneur. In the late 1800s, he and his brothers established Starcher Brothers, a firm that had a central role in the economic growth of Jackson County. Its general store employed 13 clerks, and dealt in items ranging from farm products to imported china. Its cross-tie and lumber business provided the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company with as many as a million ties in a single contract. The lumber business extended to the central mountain counties of West Virginia. Samuel's personal business interests included investments in real estate, bank stock, cattle and farming, and oil and gas exploration.

Genevieve's mother, Willia Keenan, was the granddaughter of Peter Keenan, an Irish immigrant, and Allen Skidmore, who migrated to Jackson County from eastern Virginia in the mid-1800s. The

adjoining farms of the two families included fertile land in the Mill Creek Valley. Willia, like her husband, took full advantage of offerings of the local school system. At Professor Oberholtzer's Upper Branches, she studied literature and history, building a foundation that made her a lifelong student of these disciplines. She had a special interest in architecture, and dreamed of the time when she could design a house that would combine historical values and modern conveniences. She drew her plan with an architect's precision, everything to scale. Little was needed but blueprints to begin construction. At that point, the building of the Greek Revival structure became Samuel's responsibility. He supervised its building from its basement walls of solid, 14-inch-thick concrete, to its roof of heavy slate. He meant the house to stand the test of time. This house replaced one that had been built by Genevieve's grandfather, Robert Evans Starcher, in 1855, where her father was born and where Genevieve and her brother, Richard Camden, were reared. In order to provide the site for the new house, the older residence, still a comfortable dwelling, was moved to a nearby location.

Genevieve recalls that her father approached life with great confidence; her mother was more introspective. Her father, she said by way of illustration, believed that if a man cut down a tree, God would replace it, while her mother believed that if a man cut down a tree he was obliged to plant another in its place. Two things the parents had firmly in common: the Episcopal Church and the Democratic Party.

Both Genevieve and her brother felt strong ancestral ties. Upon completion of his medical education, Camden returned to Ripley to establish a general family practice, which he maintained until his death in November 1964. Camden and his wife, Helen, extended the family through their three daughters, Margaret Lynne, Emily Anne, and Mary Camden.

Genevieve was born July 21, 1902. At the age of eight, she developed a severe case of pneumonia, which caused her to lose a year of school. In fact, for several years afterward, pulmonary disorders caused her school attendance to be irregular. She was graduated from Ripley High School in 1921 as valedictorian of her class and attended Marshall College for two years. Lacking a strong career orientation at the time, Genevieve concentrated on general education. She was undecided about her college career, and she stayed home the following year. Finally she decided to complete a degree in journalism at New York University. A return of her health problems necessitated a physical examination at the John Hopkins Medical Center, where she was advised to seek a warmer climate. Genevieve then decided to enroll at Florida Southern College (Lakeland, Florida), where her parents planned to spend the winter. She was graduated with a major in English, *magna cum laude*, in 1926, and returned home to teach in Ripley High School.

By today's standards, Ripley High School, in 1926, would be considered totally inadequate. It had no transportation system, no hot

lunch program, no federal money for special programs, and no teacher's aides, but Genevieve remembers it as a good school where necessity encouraged creativity on the part of both teachers and students. Conversations with former students suggest to Genevieve that many of them remember her more for her interest in sponsoring a club in which they learned the social graces than for the Shakespeare that she taught them. In this club, they learned such things as how to set a dinner table correctly, how to use correct table manners, and how to dress and act in different social situations.

Genevieve experienced first hand the hard times of the 1930s. In 1932, she was dismissed as an English teacher at Ripley High School, after six years of successful teaching. The termination of her contract had nothing to do with her competence as a teacher. Skilled teachers had no legal protection, such as continuing contracts, in holding their positions. Because of extensive unemployment, it was common practice during the "Great Depression" to employ only persons who were in financial need and to allow only one person from a household to work for an employer. This was especially true in public employment. The reason for Genevieve's dismissal lay in a belief that her parents did not necessarily need for her to be employed. Genevieve did not agree. Her brother, Camden, was completing his medical education at Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia. Her father had experienced financial problems, and, as a director of the First National Bank, which had closed, he had a financial responsibility for seeing that it reopened.

While unemployed in the fall of 1932, Genevieve became active in the general election campaign. Her father was chairman of the Democratic Executive Committee in Jackson County, which had a preponderance of Republican voters. He believed that political change was essential to economic change. Genevieve stumped rural school-houses at night to persuade local voters to vote the Democratic ticket. The party won in the county as well as in the state and nation.

The new State Superintendent of Free Schools was Dr. W. W. Trent, President of Alderson-Broaddus College. Early in 1933, Genevieve sent him a resume and applied for a position in his new administration. After an interview, he offered her the position of State Supervisor of Teacher Certification. Thus began for Genevieve a notable career in teacher education that spanned a 35-year period.

Genevieve recalls that, as they beheld the golden dome of the state capitol when her father drove her to Charleston to begin her new position, he remarked, "You have had help in getting this job. Now it is up to you alone to make it an important function of government." One of Dr. Trent's campaign pledges had been the restoration of integrity in granting teaching certificates. There had been persistent rumors that, for a period of time, certificates had been granted as political favors. Genevieve found the Division of Certification completely disorganized. One of her first jobs was to sort out those certificates that were valid and those that were not supported by proper credentials. During the first two years, hearings were held each

Saturday in Dr. Trent's office in order to determine whether or not legal action should be taken against persons suspected of holding bogus certificates.

Genevieve did not allow the daily problems of the early years to deter her from taking positive action that resulted in a greater sharing of responsibility between the State Department of Education and the colleges in improving the quality of teacher education. Prior to the end of her first year in the Division, the responsibility for certification of prospective teachers rested solely with the Division of Certification or two independent school districts—at that time, the state allowed Huntington and Wheeling to set their own standards. Teacher education institutions had no responsibility in the process. In early 1934, she recommended that the State Board of Education require all applicants for a first-class certificate to be recommended by the institutions from which they had been graduated. This first step brought the Division of Certification and the institutions of higher education together in a close working relationship with a single objective: better-prepared teachers in the schools.(2)

The experiences in the Division of Certification continued to be frustrating throughout the 1930s, partly because of the complex economic and social conditions that affected every segment of society. School systems became insolvent; salaries were limited; and teachers and other personnel were not paid on time. School districts were unable to meet their obligations, including their bonded indebtedness.

In 1932, the citizens of the state approved a constitutional amendment—the Tax Limitation Amendment—placing all real property into one of four classifications with a maximum rate of assessment in each classification.(3) This amendment had the immediate effect of limiting revenues available for all public services. As one way of coping with this and other problems, the legislature in 1933 reduced the existing 398 school districts to 55, with each county functioning as a school district or unit.(4)

To assure adequate funding in meeting the bonded indebtedness of the various districts, the legislature enacted a provision whereby not more than 60 percent of the available tax revenues in any one year might be used for current expenses. It required that the remaining 40 percent be reserved for annual payments of bonded indebtedness. This law prohibited a county from using any part of the tax revenues earmarked for bonded indebtedness, even though it had no outstanding bonds.(5)

Notwithstanding all of the problems arising from legislative actions during the 1930s and continuing into the 1940s, the new legislation eventually brought into being an acceptable public school system. However, the continuing economic and social difficulties of the time were not conducive to securing adequately-prepared administrative and instructional personnel.

The vast changes in education in the 1930s did not resolve the problems of teacher certification. Genevieve continued to evaluate the



credentials of each person recommended for a certificate. Requirements for many types of emergency or temporary certificates had to be developed and approved by the State Board of Education, and recommendations for other actions had to be made to the legislature. All required Genevieve's attention.

In 1940, Genevieve was designated Director of Teacher Preparation and Professional Standards. The change of title implied a new dimension for teacher education and certification in West Virginia. It also meant an extension of interest and responsibility in teacher preparation in the colleges and universities.

An event that had a lasting effect upon Genevieve and on teacher education in West Virginia resulted from a fellowship that she received from the Commission on Teacher Education of the American Council on Education to attend the University of Chicago. During the summer of 1940, the Commission sponsored a workshop that explored ideas about the role of state departments of education in the preparation of teachers.

Following the 1940 workshop, Genevieve submitted a proposal to the Commission on Teacher Education for a grant for a feasibility study of a Single Curriculum for students in teacher education in the institutions of higher education in the state that would lead to a public school certificate. The Commission provided \$5500 to fund her proposal. Moreover, the part-time services of Dr. Charles E. Prall, who had been her advisor during the workshop, and Dr. Daniel A. Prescott of the University of Chicago were also supported by the Commission.

Genevieve's proposal to develop a Single Curriculum for teachers in both elementary and secondary schools was predicated on the concept that a broad base of courses was fundamental to both. The common courses were in the arts, physical well-being, English, social sciences, sciences, and mathematics. The proposed curriculum would prepare a prospective teacher in a four-year program to teach in the elementary grades and in two specializations at the secondary level. The integrated curriculum in the first two years of teacher education was central to the proposal, with specializations, professional education studies, and student teaching constituting the major portion of the third and fourth years of the undergraduate years. Extensive preparation in the teaching specialization areas was to be reserved for graduate study.

By the spring of 1941, the project for developing the Single Curriculum was well advanced. In May, representatives of all but two of the institutions approved by the State Board of Education for preparing teachers met on the campus of West Virginia Wesleyan College in Buckhannon to decide whether the Single Curriculum should be undertaken as a state-wide program or as a project of two or three institutions as an experiment. After much consideration by the representatives attending the conference, it was agreed that the project would be undertaken on a state-wide basis if approved by the State Board of Education. The approval was granted on July 12, 1941.(6)



Later that year, the West Virginia Legislature authorized the Single Curriculum as a program by which prospective teachers would be granted the Public School Certificate for teaching in both elementary and secondary schools.(7)

During the following decade, the Single Curriculum was refined by educators in the institutions of higher education who worked closely with public school and State Department of Education personnel. By the end of the decade, all institutions of higher education that had been approved for teacher education were offering students preparing to be teachers a choice of the Single Curriculum or certification as teachers for the elementary school, grades 1 through 9, or in two major areas for grades 7 through 12. Although the Single Curriculum was not fully accepted as a program for the preparation of all teachers, many of its features are found today in the general education programs of teacher preparation and the liberal arts. In a recent interview, Genevieve stated that she continues to be convinced of the merits of the Single Curriculum.(8)

Believing that a teacher's education should extend beyond the classroom, Genevieve proposed to the State Board of Education that educational travel be substituted for classroom attendance in renewing First Class Certificates for teachers who preferred to travel rather than attend summer school. The Board granted approval, and many teachers for the first time began seeing America's historic and scenic treasures, as well as sites beyond America's two oceans.(9) West Virginia was the first state to accept travel for renewal credit, and the idea was rapidly accepted in other states.

Genevieve worked closely during those years with the County Superintendents Association, the Elementary and Secondary School Principals Association, and the State Advisory Council to develop professional programs for certifying teachers and administrators.

The 1941 state-wide conference on the Single Curriculum was notable in another way. For the first time, members of faculties of both white and black colleges approved for teacher education met for the purpose of common planning for all prospective teachers. In what was then a very different social context, West Virginia Wesleyan College was the only institution willing to risk the controversy of using its facilities for a racially-integrated higher education conference focusing on teacher education. One serious problem involved the seating arrangements in the dining hall; at that time, persons of different races were not permitted to sit together at a dining hall table. Knowing the feelings involved, Genevieve planned the seating with the utmost care and skill, although it appeared that members of the conference went leisurely into the dining hall and sat where they pleased.(10)

During the summer of 1941, Genevieve intervened to move an annual education event toward integration. She had observed in earlier years at the Annual School Administrators Conference, held at Jackson's Mill, that the dining hall set an isolated "Jim Crow" table

for black administrators and higher education personnel. She approached Dr. Trent, asking that this table be eliminated. Trent conferred with the membership of the County Superintendents Association and found that many did not think the "time had come" for such a change. However, Trent arranged for the "Jim Crow" table to be placed in line with other dining hall tables, and he sat at this table during the conference. Later, he reminded Genevieve that she had not sat at this table. Her reply was that she did not choose where she sat, but took any vacant place. It took another year before educational conferences held at Jackson's Mill had a fully-integrated dining hall. These experiences illustrate how slow and methodical were the first steps toward integration. Future steps came more easily.(11)

Genevieve's tenure as Director of Teacher Education lasted for 35 years and was marked by continuing progress in the development of teacher education in West Virginia. One of her early accomplishments in teacher certification was to move from a uniform examination, conducted by the State Department of Education and covering each of the subjects taught in West Virginia's elementary schools, to college programs requiring two to four years of study. Professional standards were also established not only for teachers, but for supervisors and administrators, including county superintendents.

After college recommendation became a requirement for licensure in the late 1930s, uniform examinations at the state level were discontinued. In 1958, however, the State Board of Education, upon Genevieve's recommendation, authorized an experimental program to grant provisional certificates to liberal arts graduates of approved colleges if they achieved acceptable scores on the National Teachers' Examination (NTE). Six years later, this experimental program of certification by examination to graduates of approved colleges became a part of certification regulations, although some colleges were reluctant to recognize the NTE for licensure. Previously, college seniors completing teacher education programs had been required to take the NTE to measure competence in relation to their peers within their college, other colleges in West Virginia, and the nation. Although no common scores were set for licensure, the State Board of Education required the scores to be placed on transcripts of seniors after July 2, 1964.

Early in her administration, Genevieve invited college and public school personnel to participate in discussions concerning educational standards. These temporary committees paved the way for a committee on cooperation appointed to advise those legally responsible for setting requirements. Eventually, this idea evolved into the West Virginia Advisory Council, a policy-making self-perpetuating body made up of representatives of college faculties, public school associations, classroom teachers, supervisors, and administrators. In 1960, the Council, which Genevieve coordinated, became a quasi-legal adjunct of the State Board of Education in matters relating to the education and licensure of teachers.

During her career, Genevieve was honored many times by professional educators at the state and national level. She served as president of the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification. In addition, she served as president of the Ohio Valley Association for Teacher Education and as a member of the Committee to Establish Guidelines in Teacher Education, U. S. Office of Education; the Committee on Education of the National Science Foundation; evaluation teams of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools; and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education.

Genevieve also received many other honors and citations. They included: an honorary degree from Morris Harvey College (now the University of Charleston) in 1967; recognitions by Glenville State College, 1968; the West Virginia Association of Classroom Teachers, 1968; and the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education, 1968. Her professional honors included memberships in Kappa Delta Pi, Delta Kappa Gamma, and Phi Delta Kappa.

A biography must include the ingredients that have made an impact on the life of the subject. Some of these that make great and lasting impressions are matters of the heart. In an interview, Genevieve was asked some direct questions concerning her personal life. She is a person who give direct answers, but she became more reserved in answering questions relating to personal affairs. She said that she agreed with the interviewers that limiting answers to details related to her background and professional experiences would possibly give the reader the impression that she was a "workaholic." However, she could not be persuaded to speak more directly on the subject. She acknowledged, however, that:

Every girl expects to marry. I was no exception. I always had a beau. At the age of 18, I believed that the plan for my life was complete with one exception. I agreed with my parents that I should attend college for at least one year. Even when I graduated, the same long range plan was intact, but never again was I so close to marriage. Being "fired" by local school board when the stress of the Depression seemed to warrant giving teaching positions to those in greatest financial need, and my leaving for employment in the State Department of Education as a consequence of not being rehired, resulted in the gradual fading of former plans.(12)

Genevieve's ever-expanding career meant enlarged opportunities for a different personal life, making it difficult at times to distinguish private and professional goals. Those who know her best see her always being a caring, loving person who recognizes the needs of others. She herself, noted that:

For the readers who may see me as an ambitious female administrator knowing little of the sensitive side of life, I shall say that for the past 44 years, I have received flowers at Christmas from the same man, and am expecting them again in 1983. That

should say something about my personal life.”(13)

Genevieve acknowledges that compulsory retirement was for her a good thing, because without it there would never have been a stopping place. As 1968 approached and she had to accept retirement, Genevieve's friends thought she would continue to live in Charleston. They cited Thomas Wolfe's admonition that “you can't go home again.”(14) Although she had lived in Charleston for 35 years, had served as president of the Altrusa Club, and was interested in local affairs, Genevieve wanted to return to her family home in Ripley. There she still had deep roots. Her great-great-grandfather had given land for the town's public square and the erection of a courthouse, had petitioned the General Assembly of Virginia to charter the town as the seat of justice, and had served as one of its governing trustees. She had moved to Charleston because her profession could be served best if she lived there, but Ripley was where she belonged, and she had to return home.

With her appreciation of the role of her own family in the history of Jackson County, Genevieve saw, even as a high school teacher, that young people knew too little about their ancestry and the contributions of early settlers. In 1967, she asked the West Virginia Board of Education for permission to move an early settler's log house to the Future Farmers of America-Future Homemakers of America (FFA-FHA) Educational Center at Cedar Lakes, as evidence of the mode of life of early leaders. With permission of the Board, she began to carry out her dream. She arranged to have a deserted log house in Jackson County dismantled log by log and stone by stone and reassembled at Cedar Lakes. Heritage House, as it is named, is furnished with household items of the early to middle 1800s, most of which belonged to Genevieve's ancestors. The house contains furniture made of wild cherry, black walnut, hard maple, and tulip poplar; handmade floor coverings; bedding; cooking utensils; authentic pictures; and many other household items used by early settlers. Although its furnishings are those usually seen in a museum, nothing about it is reminiscent of such an institution. A bronze plaque by the door bears this inscription:

#### HERITAGE HOUSE

Heritage House honors the early settlers who turned forests into grain fields, built comfortable homes, and established schools and churches. In answer to their petitions to the General Assembly of Virginia, Jackson County was created in 1831, and its Seat of Government, Ripley, in 1832. These early settlers acquired the skills and knowledge essential to the westward development of the United States.

—Gift of Genevieve Starcher, 1968

Recognizing the need for an organized approach to an authentic history of Jackson County, Genevieve organized, and served as the first president of the Jackson County Historical Society, which meets monthly and publishes a quarterly journal. One of the first projects of the society was the establishment of a museum near Ravenswood on

land once owned by George Washington. The first fully-documented early history of Jackson County, titled "The Emergence of Jackson County and of Ripley, its Seat of Justice," was published by the Society in 1981.(15) Genevieve was a principal contributor. A historical library is maintained by the Society at its headquarters in the Ripley Municipal Building.

In the summer of 1968, Genevieve initiated the restoration of Ripley's Early Settler Cemetery, long covered by fallen trees, briars, and brambles. Here rested the town's early citizens. Headstones, buried in the ground and covered by myrtle, were unearthed and set up. In keeping with custom, this sloping hillside on land owned by Jacob Starcher had originally been the family burial ground. After Ripley was chartered in 1832, the private plot was extended to accommodate the growing population. The cemetery is now neat and attractive, although the guarantee of perpetual care has not been fully achieved.

Important in the lives of Genevieve and her family has been St. John's Episcopal Church in Ripley. Organized in 1872, the church was in need of new facilities when Genevieve returned to Ripley, but there was a great reluctance to leave the old building. Members reached a compromise by taking the most cherished things from the old church and incorporating them into the new one. The stained glass windows became the focal point for the design of the new house of worship, which was dedicated in 1973 by the Right Reverend Wilburn C. Campbell and the Right Reverend Robert P. Atkinson, bishops of the Dioceses of West Virginia. The bishops, with the vestry of St. John's, named the undercroft of the church Starcher Hall in appreciation of Genevieve's devotion and contributions to the church. Following its dedication, Genevieve wrote the history of St. John's. On January 31, 1983, at a reception given by the women of the church, Genevieve was awarded the Order of the Thirty-Fifth Star for her outstanding contributions to the state.

Throughout her career, Genevieve assisted a number of needy, but worthy and capable students to further their education beyond high school. Her continuing interest in improving the quality of life through education is now carried on by the Genevieve Starcher Educational Foundation, which she established to assist local citizens, particularly graduates of Ripley High School.

Through the years, Genevieve has also maintained an active interest in the business community. She was asked how, with all her other interests, she found time to develop business skills. She replied, "I inherited an interest in business from my father, who found it challenging as a recreation as well as a means of livelihood. I found it relaxing from the seriousness of my profession, as others enjoy bridge or golf." Banking continues to be her chief interest, and she currently serves as chair of the board of directors of the First National Bank of Ripley, the county's largest bank.

Bishop Campbell expressed Genevieve's concern for people, the church, and the community in the following words:

When I arrived in the state to assume the responsibilities of Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of West Virginia, one of the first persons to greet me and to pledge her support was Genevieve Starcher. Quickly, I learned that what Miss Starcher promised, she fulfilled. From time to time when I needed advice and assistance in the broad field of education, I always turned to her. From her office in the State Capitol Complex, she knew everything going on in the state or knew someone who did know. In brief, she knew what should be done, how to do it, or locate the person who could do it. She was a leader and an executive.

But it was when I visited Ripley and St. John's Church that I came to appreciate even more her commitment to our Lord and the Episcopal Church. She came by it naturally, for the Starcher family, down through the years, was the backbone and heartbeat of St. John's. Genevieve carried on the family tradition and has gone even further. When it appeared that St. John's would have to close its doors, it was Genevieve who rallied other members of the Starcher family and friends and made sure that St. John's would have a future. Her time, talent, and treasure were freely given to preserve St. John's and to lead it into a greater future today. She helped plan the move of St. John's, encouraged the clergy and lay leaders, approved the plans, and all the while maintained a low profile. Yes, she was modest in all she did, but I knew who was waiting in the wings with words of encouragement and wisdom.

I shall always treasure my association and friendship with Miss Starcher. She has made her home town, her church, and the state a better place for having been a part of it. "Servant, well done."(16)

#### ENDNOTES

NOTE: All quotations attributed to Genevieve Starcher are from interviews conducted with Miss Starcher and the authors, June-July 1983.

1. "Student Loans, The Comstock Load," *The West Virginia Hillbilly*, 5 March 1983.
2. West Virginia Board of Education, Minutes, May 1934, pp. 18-21.
3. West Virginia, *Acts of the Legislature* (1932), pp. 16-22.
4. West Virginia, *Acts of the Legislature* (1933), pp. 73-92.

5. West Virginia, *Acts of the Legislature* (1934), pp. 179-81.
6. West Virginia Board of Education, Minutes, 12 July 1941, pp. 43-45.
7. West Virginia, *Acts of the Legislature* (1941), pp. 36-38.
8. Interview with Genevieve Starcher, 11 June 1983.
9. West Virginia, Board of Education, Minutes, 12 July 1941, pp. 43-45.
10. Interview with Genevieve Starcher, 16 July 1983.
11. Letter from Genevieve Starcher to D. Banks Wilburn, 1983.
12. Interview with Genevieve Starcher, 11 June 1983.
13. Ibid.
14. Thomas Wolfe, *You Can't Go Home Again*, (New York: Harper, 1940).
15. "The Emergence of Jackson County and of Ripley, Its Seat of Justice." Jackson County Historical Society, 1981. (not published)
16. Letter from Right Reverend Bishop Wilburn C. Campbell to D. Banks Wilburn, August 1983.

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# Ruth Ann Musick

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1897-1974

by Judy Prozzillo Byers



*UTH Ann Musick left a significant mark on the history of West Virginia by fully recognizing, appreciating, and distinguishing the vast wealth West Virginia possesses in its cultural heritage. She was the first and primary female folk scholar to work toward the preservation of West Virginia's folk life mainly through the recording of the folk tale. She became West Virginia's folklore ambassador, tireless and ever enthusiastic in her efforts to gain recognition for West Virginia folklore as an intricate component of the state's history. She dedicated the last thirty years of her life toward the accomplishment of this goal. She revived the state's folklore society and founded and edited the state's folklore journal. She collected, researched, and published four major folklore collections, while promoting folklore throughout West Virginia education from elementary to college levels. She made radio broadcasts, conducted television programs, and maintained newspaper columns promoting the importance of the state's folk culture. She also became a storyteller and public speaker on folklore and brought national recognition and attention to West Virginia's folklore. Apart from her contributions to folklore, Dr. Musick served West Virginia as an outstanding educator, creative writer, and public humanist.*

Dr. Musick came to my home when I was a child to collect the folk tales of my family, especially those told by my grandmother and mother. Her enthusiasm and encouragement ignited my interest in folklore scholarship. Through her wisdom, I am dedicated to the continuation of her work and efforts—the preservation and perpetuation of West Virginia's cultural heritage.

This article is dedicated to her memory, with acknowledgements of gratitude to all those involved in the personal interviews cited in the bibliography; to Dr. Byron Jackson, Chair of the Division of Language and Literature, Fairmont State College, who knew Dr. Musick as a colleague and friend; to Mrs. Bernard Stalder, personal friend and science and reading educator, Miller Junior High School, Fairmont,

West Virginia, who made me aware that the Women's Commission of West Virginia was compiling biographical sketches for "Missing Chapters: West Virginia Women in History"; and to Mrs. Mary Jean Ryan of Fairmont.

—J.P.B.

Ruth Ann Musick was born on September 17, 1897, in Kirksville, Missouri. Her parents, Levi Prince Musick and Zada Geoghegan Musick, worked a five-acre farm on the outskirts of the town. There, Ruth Ann spent her childhood, along with her two brothers, Archie Leroy and Ace Irl.(1)

Early experiences on this midwestern farm strongly contributed to various attitudes and beliefs that Ruth Ann later developed as an adult. The green, gentle rolling countryside of northern Missouri imprinted a deep respect for nature on this young girl's mind. Later, as a resident of West Virginia, she would write poetry to protest strip mining in her adopted mountain state.(2)

Ruth Ann also grew to love animals on the farm. She was only eight-years-old when she first witnessed the butchering of farm livestock for market. Hearing the dull thump of the hammers again and again as the farm helpers struck the pigs' heads with staggering blows left a horrified impression on her. She decided never to eat meat again, much to her mother's initial anguish over the well-being of her young daughter.(3) But, her aesthetically sensitive mother, whose strength and understanding Ruth Ann later modeled, finally accepted with great patience her daughter's conviction to become a vegetarian at the age of eight.(4)

The entire Musick family was regarded as talented by the neighbors and townspeople.(5) Many of the family members were sympathetic to the fine arts. Ruth Ann's father was an enthusiastic reader. His older brother, John R. Musick, was a professional writer. Ruth Ann's older brother, Ace, became a commercial printer while Archie, the younger brother, became a professional artist.(6)

Later, Archie Musick became artistically significant to West Virginia as the illustrator of three of Ruth Ann's folk tale collections: *The Telltale Lilac Bush, and Other West Virginia Ghost Tales*; *Green Hills of Magic, West Virginia Folktales from Europe*; and *Coffin Hollow and Other Ghost Tales*. He studied under the guidance of both Thomas Hart Benton at the Art Student's League in New York and S. McDonald Wright in Los Angeles. Archie's bold style of rustic romanticism infused the black-and-white scratch board drawings he created to illustrate the characters and settings at the heart of these West Virginia ghost tales.(7)

Ruth Ann began writing as a child. At the age of 12, she received her first literary award for a Christmas short story entitled "St. Nicholas" that she entered in a contest sponsored by the *Kirksville Daily Express*. (8) Later, while she was an undergraduate at Kirksville

State Teacher's College, now North Missouri State University, she wrote the college's daily news in a column of the *Kirkville Daily Express*. (9)

Ruth Ann Musick's formal education was extensive. She entered Kirkville State Teacher's College in 1916 and in 1919 received a Bachelor of Science degree in education. In 1920 she continued her education at the State University of Iowa in Iowa City. (10) Even though her talents were in the areas of English and literature, her father's conviction that a sound knowledge of mathematics was a valuable academic possession influenced her to study mathematics. She was awarded a Master of Science degree in 1928 with a major in mathematics and minor in English. (11)

After receiving her bachelor's degree and while studying for another bachelor's degree and earning her master's degree, Ruth Ann taught English and mathematics in various high schools. From September 1919 to June 1921 she was a member of the faculty at Luana High School, Luana, Iowa. She transferred to Garwin High School, Garwin, Iowa, from September 1921 to June 1922. She was on the faculty of Logan High School, LaCrosse, Wisconsin, from 1923 until 1931. In 1931 she accepted a position at Phoenix Union High School, Phoenix, Arizona, where she taught until 1936. (12)

In 1938, Ruth Ann enrolled in a doctorate program at the State University of Iowa. Her studies emphasized her natural inclination toward English and literature coupled with a new interest in folklore literature. In 1943 she received a Doctor of Philosophy degree in English, with emphasis upon creative writing. (13)

The Scottish, Irish, and English background of the Musick family was reflected in the folk songs sung by the parents and by the children's playparty games. Her mother and aunts also told folk tales.

The Musicks were English. Some of the Musicks had migrated directly from England, while others came first to Virginia, where many of them stayed. Ruth Ann's grandfather moved from Virginia to St. Louis County, Missouri, where he met and married Mary Prince. Mary's parents were Levi Prince, a Dutch-Jewish peddler, who was believed to have been murdered for his money and goods since he left with his pack and never returned. He had married Grizella Fugate, whose family was French and had lived in Bath County, Kentucky, before moving to St. Louis County.

Ruth Ann's mother's family, the Geoghegans, had migrated from Ireland, settling in New York and Kentucky. Her grandfather, Reverend James Geoghegan, was a Baptist minister who came from Bourbon County, Kentucky, to Hancock County, Illinois, where he married her grandmother. Later, in about 1881, the family settled in Adair County, Missouri. Ruth Ann's grandmother, Nancy Ann Dye Geoghegan, from whom most of her mother's songs seem to have come, was the daughter of Suzannah Cameron Dye and the granddaughter of Elizabeth Lee Cameron, who was General Robert E. Lee's aunt. The Camerons were Scottish, but the Dyes had come from Germany to Ohio. Later, they

moved to Hancock County, Illinois. Both of Ruth Ann's parents and most of her ancestors were Baptist, but she preferred the Episcopal Church all of her life.(14)

Despite her multi-national ancestry, it was not until Ruth Ann began her doctoral studies that an affinity toward folklore began to blossom. Her dissertation director and doctoral committee encouraged her to use folklore as they guided her writing of a creative dissertation, a novel entitled *Hell's Holler*, which contained folklore from the Chariton Hills of Missouri.(15) As part of her doctoral work, she also collected the folk songs of her family in Missouri.

Professor Edwin Ford Piper, folklore professor at the State University of Iowa, first interested Ruth Ann in folklore and encouraged her to remember and write down the songs she had heard during her childhood. As a member of Professor Piper's last folklore class, Ruth Ann collected her family's songs, many of which were brought over from Scotland and England through oral transmission. Professor Piper had originally hoped to use her family songs in his extensive midwest collection. Unfortunately, he died before the semester was completed. Later, after a fire had destroyed much of his material and when it became evident that no one else would use the recordings and texts she had given him, Dr. Musick and her colleague J. W. Ashton, then vice-president of Indiana University, revised and enlarged Piper's collection into a book-length manuscript entitled "Folk Songs From Missouri and The Ozarks." It was selected for the 1947 Memoir of the American Folklore Society, but was never published, due to lack of funds. In 1950, after Dr. Musick had moved to West Virginia, she reorganized and re-edited the manuscript, adding a large number of additional Missouri folk songs she had collected, many of which were given to her by Vance Randolph, eminent American regional folk scholar, who had already completed his four volume work, *Ozark Folksongs*, and planned no further publication in this field. Dr. Musick dedicated this finalized manuscript to Vance Randolph and to the memory of her mother and of Professor Edwin Ford Piper.(16)

In 1942, Dr. Musick began teaching at William Penn College, Oskaloosa, Iowa. Despite her interest in folklore, she was assigned to teach algebra and trigonometry in a World War II V-12 program at the college. Her technical background was also responsible for her work for the government at the University of Iowa's Physics-Engineering Development Project. During this time she was sent from Iowa City as a research assistant in mathematics to Inyokern, California, for three months and later to Clinton, Iowa, where the University of Iowa was conducting experiments. Before coming to West Virginia, Dr. Musick taught during the spring of 1946 at Iowa Wesleyan College, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa.(17)

During these years, Dr. Musick was married briefly to an artist who became an alcoholic and was committed to an asylum for a number of years. Her mother had never approved of the courtship and refused to attend the wedding.(18) After much unhappiness, the

marriage ended in divorce in the latter 1940s. Ruth Ann retained her own name. She never spoke of her marriage, but carried great sadness. Years later, her ex-husband visited her once in Fairmont, West Virginia, but no reconciliation occurred. Neither ever married again.(19)

Many aspects of Ruth Ann Musick's early life served as background for her work and life as an adopted West Virginian. Her formal education was basically completed, and she had gained valuable and varied teaching experience in both secondary and higher education. From her family she had inherited a respect for tradition. Through folklore she had found a means to preserve and perpetuate cultural heritage. All of this helped prepare her for the significant role she would play in West Virginia's history.

Dr. Musick came to West Virginia partly by luck, but mostly by careful consideration. Through folklore research, she realized that this area of Appalachia was virtually untouched by folklore scholarship. She felt that the vast wealth of folk culture should be recorded and preserved, and she saw her professional life directed toward the accomplishment of this mission. Her vision was not to remain an idle dream. In the fall of 1946, she accepted a teaching position at Fairmont State College.(20) During her post-interview meeting at the college, she had eagerly outlined her desire to record the folklore of West Virginia and had beseeched President George H. Hand to allow her to develop folklore and folk literature at the college.(21) At that time, neither subject was prominent on any college campus in the state. Even though Dr. Musick was originally hired to teach college mathematics (and did so for a few years) she eventually began to teach a few classes in the English Department. Ultimately, she became a fulltime associate and then professor of English until her retirement in May 1967. In 1948 Dr. Hand allowed her to start a folklore class that remains popular in the English curriculum of the college.(22)

Dr. Musick loved every aspect of West Virginia: its friendly people, its unbridled naturalness, its majestic hills. (23) She commonly referred to the hills as green hills of magic and used the phrase as the title of her third collection of folktales, *Green Hills of Magic, West Virginia Folktales From Europe*. In the text's introduction she wrote:

... there they were—hills upon hills—billowing up like waves from a sea of moss-green velvet. Something had happened. We were in another world—a world of magic! Someone said it was West Virginia. All I knew was I was under a complete spell. I had never seen anything like the grandeur of these hills. There was something mystical about it all—something supernatural.(24)

Much of West Virginia was like the Missouri known to Dr. Musick. Her native Missouri was also rolling and green, with the Ozark Mountains to the south. The same Anglo-Celtic Germanic population that had migrated into Appalachia in the early 1700s moved west into the Ozarks. Her English-Irish lineage, mixed with Scottish and German traces was predominant in the bloodlines of many West Virginians. She knew the Scotch-Irish folk songs, games,



and dances, the dulcimer and the fiddle, and the quilting bees and other mountain crafts.

West Virginia's folk life was at the same time different from that of Missouri. The hills were filled with ghost tales never before collected. The people of Southern Europe and Asia Minor who had migrated into the hills at the turn of the nineteenth century to work the railroads and mine the coal possessed traditions very different from the Celtic stock who settled here before them. To the recording and preserving of all of this rich cultural treasure Dr. Musick dedicated the rest of her life.

Dr. Musick was a dynamo in the work of recognizing and preserving West Virginia's folklore. William Hugh Jansen, Folklore Professor at the University of Kentucky, eulogized Dr. Musick as one of the "fine but lonely scholars who have personified West Virginia folklore, both within and beyond the boundaries of that state. During her many years in the English Department of Fairmont State College," he continued, "she was practically a public relations agent for folklore within West Virginia."(25)

Two years after Dr. Musick began teaching her folklore class, she revived the West Virginia Folklore Society. The society had been originally founded by Dr. John Harrington Cox, English Professor at West Virginia University, on July 15, 1915, and had remained active until June 28, 1917. From its membership Dr. Cox gathered material for a text, *Folk Songs of the South*. Dr. Musick became the renewed society's archivist. The following year she founded the *West Virginia Folklore Journal* and served as its editor and main writer until her retirement in 1967.(26) The quarterly journal was the official publication of the West Virginia Folklore Society, and its actual organizing, typing, stenciling, mimeographing, and mailing to many of the larger universities and public libraries in the United States and Canada were the sole responsibility of Dr. Musick. Even though this endeavor took a great deal of time, Dr. Musick stated, "I feel this is a *very important* project, and should be continued to be carried out."(27) Indeed, the journal was revived in 1974 in memory of Dr. Musick.

From numerous contacts with her students and other informants in West Virginia, especially in the north central area, Dr. Musick collected a wealth of folklore. Her major interest was the folk tale, mainly the ghost tale, a folk genre that had rarely been recorded in West Virginia before her work. Even though Dr. Musick used all collecting methods to record the folklore, she felt indebted to her former students at Fairmont State College for many of her folk tales: "I would say that some ninety percent or more of all my ghost tales were brought in by my students, who got them from their parents, grandparents, or older neighbors in most cases."(28) In addition, she observed, even though "older people may very well object to telling any supernatural experiences to outsiders . . . they usually have no objections whatever to telling such happenings to younger relatives or neighbor youngsters whom they have watched grow up."(29)



From her field work Dr. Musick published four West Virginia folk lore collections: *Ballads, Folk Songs, and Folk Tales From West Virginia*; *The Telltale Lilac Bush, and Other West Virginia Ghost Tales*; *Green Hills of Magic, West Virginia Folktales From Europe*; and *Coffin Hollow and Other Ghost Tales*. *The Green Hills of Magic* won the first literary award to be given by the West Virginia Library Association. Her last book was actually published posthumously, but one week before her death, Dr. Musick was notified that this folk tale collection was going to be published. All four published collections were enthusiastically received by West Virginians at the time of their publication and still retain their popularity around the state, especially in the schools.(30)

Dr. Musick's dedication to West Virginia's folk life was not limited to collecting and publishing. She was also a spokeswoman for West Virginia folklore both within the state and beyond its boundaries. Nationally, Dr. Musick maintained active membership in the National Folk Festival Association and the American Folklore Society. She read papers on West Virginia folklore at national conferences of the American Folklore Society held in El Paso, Texas; Washington, D.C.; Bloomington, Indiana; and Chicago, Illinois. She also spoke at seasonal meetings held at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, and in New York.(31) Her talks covered ghosts, witchcraft, and werewolves. (32) She befriended and collaborated with a number of nationally-recognized folk scholars: Stith Thompson, Richard Dorson, Kenneth Goldstein, and, of course, Vance Randolph. She published articles in *The American Folklore Journal* and regional folklore magazines, such as *Midwest Folklore*, *Hoosier Folklore*, and *Southern Folklore Quarterly*.(33) She was a member of the Folklore Society of Ohio, attending the meetings and presenting papers there. In 1963, for example, she spoke on West Virginia ghost stories at Denison University in Granville, Ohio. She also attended the meetings of the Council of the Alleghenies.(34) In 1971, a few years after her retirement from teaching, she was a guest on the nationally-televised Marie Torre Show in Pittsburgh, discussing the West Virginia folk tale.

In West Virginia Dr. Musick lectured to a vast number of students, educators, P.T.A.s, and professional, social, and civic organizations at both the state and local levels. Possessing a natural flare for drama and language, she presented so many storytelling sessions that her name became synonymous with the ghost tale, especially to the thousands of West Virginia students who heard her tell stories from the 1950s to the 1970s. Since the West Virginia Folklore Society was affiliated with the West Virginia Education Association (WVEA), Dr. Musick, her long-time friend Dr. Patrick Gainer, a prominent folklorist from West Virginia University, and other society officers conducted folklore workshops at the annual statewide conferences of WVEA in the late 1950s through 1967.(35) At the same time, she wrote two folklore columns for West Virginia newspapers: "The Old Folks Say" for the *Times-West Virginian* in Fairmont and "Sassafras Tea" for the

*Allegheny Journal* in Elkins and Marlinton. Periodically, Dr. Musick appeared on radio and television shows throughout the state, and at the Mountain State Arts and Crafts Festival at Cedar Lakes in Ripley.(36) In 1973, just one year before her death, she was the folklore consultant and instructor at the newly established Augusta Heritage Arts Workshop on the campus of Davis and Elkins College in Elkins. For all of her outstanding contributions to the cultural preservation of West Virginia, Dr. Musick was granted, posthumously, "The Outstanding Mountaineer Award in the Arts" in October 1974.(37)

Aside from her commitment to folklore, Dr. Musick had other interests and concerns that endeared her to West Virginia and particularly to Fairmont. On campus and around town, she was a familiar figure who captivated those she met with her own blend of charm and idiosyncrasies. Walking outside, a common pastime and necessity, she could usually be seen dressed in a trench coat, boots (for her feet were always cold), and hat tied with a layered veil. On her route to and from college she would often carry two heavy valises, one balanced in each hand, stuffed with student essays, books, and folklore projects. Oblivious to the weight of her bags, she would step lightly, spryly down the steps or up the hill. Just a hint of a stoop in her profile could be noticed in later years. She was a small woman with clear, ivory skin, twinkling grey-green eyes, and a laughing smile. Her closely cropped brown hair, slightly streaked with white, fluttered in the breeze, as if it too were caught in the boundless energy and enthusiasm her whole body emitted. She talked as fast as she moved, in crisp, precise tones, greeting passersby.(38)

She was a beloved professor and a dedicated, competent educator who enjoyed her students. To them, she discharged an unselfish interest in their academic development and an "unflagging dedication. . . [Their] virtues she always discovered with no difficulty whatsoever."(39) In her twenty-one years at Fairmont State College she worked in both the math and English departments, spending most of her time in the latter. She loved to teach literature, creative writing, and, of course, folklore. Often she would act out singlehandedly the plays of Shakespeare while teaching them. It was not uncommon for her to jump on a desk or hide behind a door to explain fully a scene to the class. Her enthusiasm for teaching flowed over into many professional organizations and, after retirement, she supported the National Retired Teachers Association.(40) While she may have retired from the college, she never left it. Her apartment was adjacent to the college hill, and she was a common sight on campus or in the library taking notes, analyzing folklore research, or merely sharpening the stack of pencils she carried in her purse.(41) She taught part time in the English Department in the late 1960s. She deserved the professor emeritus status that was awarded to her soon after her retirement.

Dr. Musick's interest in creative writing originated in her girlhood, and she continued to write poetry and short stories in her retirement years. Eighteen of her short stories were published in literary magazines

throughout the United States. Most of the stories were narrative fantasies that projected folk tale motifs, characterizations, and situations. Among her stories were: "The Man Who Could Ride Lightning," published in 1957 in *The Colorado Quarterly Magazine*; "Miracle Man Steele," published in 1946 in the *Prairie Schooner Magazine*; "A Teamster and His Boss," published in 1970 in the *Morris Harvey Publication*; and "The Stranger From Cheat Mountain," published in the *Laurel Review* in 1965.(42)

Dr. Musick had a special warmth for drama and wrote several plays. One of them, *The Goat Man*, was presented at Fairmont State College, and a three-act play, *Jim Tittle's Ear*, was performed at the State University of Iowa.(43) Dr. Musick also supported the Marion County Little Theatre, acted in a variety of its productions, and served as its president in 1963-1964.(44)

Dr. Musick loved to write poetry as much as she did short stories and was instrumental in organizing the Marion County Poetry Society, of which she was president for a number of years. She was also active in the West Virginia Poetry Society. For her efforts in enhancing the appreciation of poetry among West Virginians and for her own talents as a poet, Dr. Musick was one of the three regional writers honored at The Autumn Leaves Fall Meeting of the Huntington Poetry Society on October 30, 1965.(45)

Unlike her short stories that modeled folklore settings and themes, Dr. Musick's poems displayed her individual brand of humanism. Through her poetry she voiced "her strong convictions towards the preservation of the land against strip mining, a humanity toward animals, and the identification of the rustic beauty of West Virginia."(46) Two of her poems won first place in the West Virginia Poetry Society's Roy Lee Harmon Poet Laureate Award: "You Who Take Bribes" (a protest against strip mining) and "Harper's Ferry" (an elegy to John Brown). Most of her poetry appeared in either *Panorama Magazine* (part of the Sunday edition of Morgantown's *Dominion Post Newspaper*) or in *Echoes of the West Virginia Poetry Society* (the society's annual journal). Two of her poems, however, were published in *Poet*, an international poetry magazine. Dr. Musick also wrote rhyming jingles for advertisements, several of which were published.(47)

Dr. Musick was also a member of the Marion County Humane Society and "belonged to almost all the Humane Societies in the United States."(48) She was active in the Defenders of Wildlife and, in the early 1970s, collected thousands of signatures in her petition to save the whales.(49) So loyal was she to the preservation of animal life that she refused to harm even insects.

All of her pet dogs and cats were strays.(50) One dog was a mongrel named Molly. One morning on her way to college, Dr. Musick found the dog half-dead in a puddle of her own blood. The dog had recently delivered puppies, but her stomach had been split open from side to side. Dr. Musick wrapped the dog in her trench coat and carried her to Fairmont General Hospital, located on the other side of

the college. Molly became Dr. Musick's faithful companion, but resisted the closeness of any other human being.(51)

On November 8, 1973, Dr. Musick was diagnosed as having spinal cancer. The disease quickly spread throughout her body. Aware that she had only a few precious months to live, she "got her house in order."

She called to her side friends who understood the importance of her folklore work in West Virginia. She wished for this valuable work to be continued. She outlined a legacy to West Virginia in the hopes that her wish would be fulfilled.

Not forgetting her other concerns, Dr. Musick bequeathed parts of her estate to worthy causes: the advancement of the welfare of the American Indian; the Humane Information Services, Incorporated; the Marion County Humane Society; and the Student Loan Fund at Fairmont State College.(52) Before her death she allowed herself to be subjected to experimental treatments and was the first patient at the center to be given chemotherapy. For the advancement of cancer research she donated her body to the West Virginia University Medical Center. Dr. Musick died on July 2, 1974. She was seventy-six years old.

Many West Virginians are working to continue Ruth Ann Musick's work. In 1980, the library at Fairmont State College was named the Ruth Ann Musick Library.(54) The West Virginia Folklore Society and the *West Virginia Folklore Journal* are once again active.(55) Dr. Musick's remaining folklore estate is being edited and published in the hopes that a folklore archives containing her papers can be established at the Ruth Ann Musick Library to encourage future folklore preservation in West Virginia.(56) A statewide folk life institute or academy has been envisioned. Professor Jansen ended his memorial to Ruth Ann Musick by hoping "that other volumes will be quarried from Dr. Musick's literary estate. Nothing could better serve her crusade for the recognition of West Virginia Folklore."(57)

Her life's work, and her contribution to our state, are epitomized in the work of a young student of folklore. Jodie Stalnaker, a sixth-grade student at Jayenne Elementary School in Fairmont, gave a report on Ruth Ann Musick and her importance to West Virginia one April day in 1983. When she began to research her topic, she found no official biographical report, but she did uncover enough fragmented facts to weave an image of Dr. Musick's life and contributions. She read many of her folk tales, especially the ones Jodie's own grandmother had told to Dr. Musick. She listened to anecdotes about Dr. Musick told by her family, especially by her aunt Rose Hlich, who relished Dr. Musick's storytelling ability. When Jodie gave her report, her classmates were captivated by Dr. Musick's life. They too had heard their families talk of her and had read her folk tales in the school library.(53) Jodie Stalnaker's experience is repeated again and again in West Virginia classrooms.

## ENDNOTES

1. *The West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, 1974 ed., s.v. "Musick, Ruth Ann," by Judy Prozzillo. (Miss Prozzillo interviewed Dr. Musick during March and April 1974 to gather this information. The interviews were conducted at Dr. Musick's home in Fairmont, West Virginia.)

2. *The West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, 1974 ed., p. 155.

3. Interview with Eleanor M. Ford, Professor Emerita at Fairmont State College, Morgantown, WV, 19 July 1983. Hereafter referred to as "Ford Interview."

4. *The West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, 1974 ed., p. 231.

5. Interview with Ross Allen, Opera Director at Indiana University, Bloomington Campus, 1 August 1982.

6. *The West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, 1974 ed., p. 230.

7. *The West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, 1976 ed., "Musick, Archie Leroy," by Judy Prozzillo, p. 3406.

8. *The West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, 1974 ed., p. 153.

9. Ibid.

10. "Personal and Professional File on Ruth Ann Musick," housed in the President's Office, Fairmont State College.

11. Ford Interview.

12. "Personal and Professional File on Ruth Ann Musick."

13. *The West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, 1974 ed., p. 231.

14. Ruth Ann Musick, " 'Introduction,' Folk Songs From Missouri and The Ozarks," n.p., pp. xiii-xiv.

15. *The West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, 1974 ed., p. 157.

16. Musick, "Folk Songs From Missouri and The Ozarks," pp. ix-xvi.

17. "Personal and Professional File on Ruth Ann Musick."

18. Interviews with Ruth Ann Musick, Folklorist, Fairmont, West Virginia, March and April 1974. (This detail has not been published before.)

19. Ford Interview.

20. "Personal and Professional File on Ruth Ann Musick."

21. Ford Interview.

22. *The West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, 1974 ed., p. 232.

23. Ford Interview.

24. Ruth Ann Musick, "Introduction," *Green Hills of Magic, West Virginia Folktales From Europe* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1970), p. xi.
25. Ruth Ann Musick, *Coffin Hollow and Other Ghost Tales*, with forward by William Hugh Jansen (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1977), p. IX.
26. "The History of the West Virginia Folklore Society," *West Virginia Folklore Journal* 17, (1974): 2.
27. "Personal and Professional File on Ruth Ann Musick."
28. Ruth Ann Musick, "Preface," *Coffin Hollow and Other Ghost Tales* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1977), p. XVIII.
29. Ibid.
30. Critical acclaim about Dr. Musick's published folk tale collections include: "The Telltale Lilac Bush will have a place on every shelf of American ghostlore."—*New York Folklore Quarterly*, 1965; "The Telltale Lilac Bush . . . forms a significant addition to the growing study of the ghost tale as a type of folk literature."—*University Press of Kentucky Publications*, 1965; "Green Hills of Magic . . . [provides] excellent examples of the diverse folk beliefs and cultural patterns of the immigrant groups that have made their home in West Virginia."—*University Press of Kentucky Publications*, 1970; "Coffin Hollow and Other Ghost Tales . . . will appeal to the folklorist and the general reader alike."—*University Press of Kentucky Publications*, 1977.
31. "Personal and Professional File on Ruth Ann Musick."
32. *The West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, 1974 ed., p. 232.
33. Ibid.
34. "Personal and Professional File on Ruth Ann Musick."
35. "The History of the West Virginia Folklore Society," p. 2.
36. *The West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, 1974 ed., p. 232.
37. This award was presented during the half-time homecoming game ceremonies at West Virginia University by Governor Arch A. Moore, Jr. It was received by the executrixes of Dr. Musick's folklore estate, Dr. Judy Prozzillo Byers and Catherine Faris, and is housed in the West Virginia Room of West Virginia University's Library.
38. Interview with Rose Ilich, English teacher, North Marion High School, Fairmont, West Virginia, 15 July 1983.
39. Musick, *Coffin Hollow and Other Ghost Tales*, p. IV.
40. "Personal and Professional File on Ruth Ann Musick."
41. Interview with Dr. Janet Salvati, Librarian, Fairmont State College, Fairmont, West Virginia, 6 June 1983.
42. *The West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, 1974 ed., p. 161.

43. Ibid.
44. "Personal and Professional File on Ruth Ann Musick."
45. *The West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, 1974 ed., p. 161.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. "Personal and Professional File on Ruth Ann Musick."
49. Salvati Interview.
50. Ford Interview.
51. Musick Interviews.
52. "Last Will and Testament of Ruth Ann Musick," State of West Virginia, County of Marion, 20 February 1974.
53. Interview with Jodie Stalnaker, sixth-grade student, Jayenne School in Fairmont, West Virginia, 15 July 1983.
54. "Musick Library," *West Virginia Libraries Association*, Spring 1981, p. 16. (Dr. Janet Salvati and Ruth Ann Powell, Fairmont State College librarians, initiated the request that the library be named in Dr. Musick's memory.)
55. Dr. Musick requested that the society and journal be revived. Both were, through the efforts of Dr. Patrick Gainer, Margaret Pantalone, Catherine Faris, Dr. Judy Prozzillo Byers, and Dr. Byron Jackson. All served on the society's executive board and on the journal's editorial staff.
56. "Last Will and Testament of Ruth Ann Musick." (Dr. Judy Prozzillo Byers and Catherine Faris were named executrixes to the Musick Folklore Estate by Dr. Musick. Pat Musick, an artist and niece of Dr. Musick, has graciously consented to illustrate her aunt's remaining folklore collections. She follows in the footsteps of her father, Archie Musick, who illustrated his sister's first four published books.)
57. Musick, *Coffin Hollow and Other Ghost Tales*, p. XV.



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*The West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, 1976 ed. S.v. "Musick, Archie Leroy," by Judy Prozzillo.

*The West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia*, 1974 ed. S.v. "Musick, Ruth Ann," by Judy Prozzillo.

# BIOGRAPHIES

## PROJECT EDITOR

**Frances Sizemore Hensley** is an assistant professor in the History Department of Marshall University (West Virginia). She earned her Ph.D. in Women's History in 1981 from Ohio State University. A Wyoming County, West Virginia native, Hensley teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in United States' women's history at Marshall University. Current research projects include an article on the 19th century women's rights movement in preparation for the Women's Studies Encyclopedia, and oral history interviews of women in the labor movement in West Virginia.

## AUTHORS

**Bettijane Christopher Burger** teaches English, speech, and journalism at Horace Mann Junior High School in Charleston, West Virginia. After receiving degrees from West Virginia University and the University of Hawaii, she taught in public schools in Hawaii, Florida, and Delaware. Ms. Burger has been published in several newspapers and magazines and is a state officer in the National Organization for Women. She is the daughter of Mary Behner Christopher.

**Judy Ann Prozzillo Byers** is an assistant professor of English and a supervisor of language arts student teachers at Fairmont State College (West Virginia). Byers has earned an AB in English Education and Social Studies Education from Fairmont State College, an MA in English and Education from West Virginia University, and an Ed. D. in Curriculum and Instruction, English Education, Folklore, and Creative Dramatics, also from West Virginia University. The Fairmont native is a folklore instructor, storyteller, lecturer, and workshop director. She was named literary executrix to the Ruth Ann Musick folklore estate in 1974 and is in the process of editing for publication Dr. Musick's folk tale collection and children's lore collection.

**Ethel O. Davie** is a frequent international traveler who has studied the literature and culture of countries on five continents and the Caribbean. Co-editor of the Caribbean literature section of *Handbook of Latin American Studies*, she is currently engaged in research on women writers abroad. A graduate of West Virginia State College and Columbia University, she holds an Ed.D. from West Virginia University. A professor of Foreign Languages and chair of the Faculty Senate at West Virginia State College, Dr. Davie was head of the Foreign Languages Department from 1974-1984.

**Leonard J. Deutsch** is chair of the English Department at Marshall University (West Virginia). He received his Ph.D. from Kent State University, where he was a Ford Foundation Fellow in Ethnic Studies. He has written chapters for the Modern Language Association's *Masterpieces of World Literature* series and has supplied entries to reference works. His articles have appeared in the *College Language Association Journal*, the *Bulletin of Bibliography*, *Phylon*, *Obsidian*, *Notes on Contemporary Literature*, and many other periodicals. He

has served as national chair of membership for MFLUS (Society for the Study of Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States). For three years, he was editor-in-chief of the newsletter of the West Virginia Civil Liberties Union.

**Shirley C. Eagan** has worked for the West Virginia University Center for Extension and Continuing Education since 1964 and is currently program development specialist with the Division of Personal and Family Development in Morgantown, West Virginia. She serves as state advisor to the West Virginia Extension Homemakers Council, the modern version of Farm Women's Clubs.

**Janet Gamble Greene** has taught in non-traditional adult education programs in southern West Virginia since 1979, when she joined the faculty of the Southern Appalachian Labor School at West Virginia Institute of Technology. Her chapter on Aunt Jenny Wilson grew out of work on coal mining history in Logan County, which was supported in part by a grant from the Humanities Foundation of West Virginia. A native of McDowell County, West Virginia, she holds graduate degrees in English and history from Ohio State and Stanford Universities.

**Joanne Morgan Hartman**, a life-long resident of Charleston, West Virginia, graduated from Sweet Briar College (Virginia) with majors in music and religion. She is interested in family history and in the history of the Kanawha Valley. Rebecca Tendael Wood Littlepage was her great-grandmother.

**William H. Hardin** has taught social studies for nine years in the Wayne County, West Virginia, schools and has been an instructor in history at Glenville State College. Research for his article on Elizabeth Kee was partially funded by an Albert J. Beveridge Grant for Research in American History from the American Historical Association. Hardin also presented a paper, "The Kee Family: A Political Dynasty in West Virginia," at the Mid-Dakota Conference on Local History, in Aberdeen, South Dakota in 1980. He has an A.B. and M.A. in history from Marshall University (West Virginia).

**Margaret Phalen McKenzie**, a Mercer County, West Virginia native, is a homemaker and mother of three children. Formerly a teacher in Greenbrier County, she earned a B.S. in Vocational Home Economics at Concord College (West Virginia), and did graduate work at West Virginia University. She is immediate past state president of the West Virginia Extension Homemakers Council.

**Sandra Law Metheny** is the Lifestyles editor of the *Morgantown Dominion Post* where she has been employed for the last 14 years. A journalism graduate of West Virginia University, she has received several awards for the Lifestyles section of the newspaper and for her feature-writing. A single parent with two children, Metheny is co-chair of the community liaison committee of the Center for Women's Studies at West Virginia University, and active in the Mason-Dixon Figure Skating Club and other community interests.

**Estella Roberts Pomroy** is professor of business administration at Parkersburg Community College (West Virginia). She is a graduate of West Virginia University and holds M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from Florida State University. Her avocational interests include local history and genealogy. She is active in the West Virginia Daughters of the American Revolution.

**Dolly Sherwood** has written on a variety of cultural subjects and is presently completing a biography of 19th-century American sculptor Harriet Hosmer. A native of St. Louis, she received her A.B. degree from Washington University (Missouri) and M.A. in humanistic studies from the West Virginia College of Graduate Studies.

**Delmer K. Somerville**, a native of Jackson County, West Virginia, served in public education for 45 years, holding positions from teacher in a one room schoolhouse to superintendent of Jackson County Schools. Dr. Somerville, who received his Ed.D. from Cornell University (New York), was academic dean of Glenville State College (West Virginia) from 1952 until he retired in 1972. He also taught extension courses for West Virginia University and is past president of the West Virginia Association of Academic Deans and the West Virginia Association of Higher Education.

**Nancy Whear** holds a B.Mus. degree in violin from DePauw University (Indiana), an M.A. in music history from Marshall University (West Virginia), and an M.S.L.S. (Library Science) from the University of Kentucky. She is a librarian at Marshall University, specializing in West Virginia and Appalachian materials. As a violinist with several orchestras and chamber groups, she annually teaches classes in stringed instruments at the National Music Camp in Interlochen, Michigan.

**D. Banks Wilburn**, who died in 1986, began his 47-year career in public education in rural Fredrick County, Virginia. He taught at Iowa Northern State University, was assistant superintendent of Berkeley County (West Virginia) schools, and spent 17 years as dean of the Teachers College at Marshall University (West Virginia) and 13 years as president of Glenville State College (West Virginia). He also wrote tests, textbooks, and other education materials.

**Sally Sue Witten** is assistant dean of the Community College at West Virginia State College. She holds a B.A. degree from Ohio Wesleyan University and a J.D. from the University of Cincinnati (Ohio). Prior to her employment in higher education in 1979, Dr. Witten pursued several other careers, among them practicing law in her hometown of Bellaire, Ohio, and acting as city manager for a community in northwest Ohio. For a number of years, she served as advisor to Girl Scout councils throughout the country in her position as management consultant for the national Girl Scout organization.

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## MISSING CHAPTERS II

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# WEST VIRGINIA WOMEN in HISTORY

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Traditional history, with its focus on politics, diplomacy, war, and great economic change, has been the province of a few "great men." In earlier times, the women did not usually work in these areas. Con-

sequently, they were not often included in history books. The *Missing Chapters* project is an effort to incorporate the stories of West Virginia women, who have made significant but, as yet, unheralded contributions to the state into the mainstream of West Virginia history.

"One of the most important and serious gaps in the history of the state has, I believe, related to the place of women in its development. In my work with *Missing Chapters*, I believe I've had some part in redressing that imbalance . . . (W)omen have been chosen who have made important contributions or who have personified aspects of the West Virginia spirit and character."

— Dr. Otis K. Rice, author of *West Virginia:  
A History* and other historical studies.

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